

STEVEN HELLER
& LOUISE FILI



GRAPHIC DESIGN

BETWEEN THE WARS

Italian Art Deco: Graphic Design between the Wars is a unique survey of commercial design in Italy during an extraordinary period of creative vitality and political turmoil.

Featuring many design motifs that have never before been published in the United States, *Italian Art Deco* offers an exquisite showcase of modern Italian graphic design, known for its bold typography and streamlined imagery. This book also reveals the Futurist influence on commercial Art Moderne, while examining how such individualistic work could flourish under a ruthless fascist regime between World Wars I and II.

Grouped by subject and reproduced in either color or black-and-white, the more than 500 designs, including trademarks, labels, posters, packages, calendars, and book and magazine covers celebrate a wide range of Italian products, while bringing to light the often chilling images and symbols of political propaganda.

Perfect for graphic designers, design students, art history buffs, and lovers of Italian ephemera, *Italian Art Deco* is a colorful examination of how a brief artistic movement has contributed to an enduring national style.



CHRONICLE BOOKS

SAN FRANCISCO

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C H R O N I C L E B O O K S

& L O U I S E F I L I



B E T W E E N T H E W A R S



S A N F R A N C I S C O

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I N T R O D U Z I O N E

8

P O L I T I C A

18

C U L T U R A

28

A L L A M O D A

42

I N D U S T R I A

52

P R O D O T T I

66

B U O N A P P E T I T O

84

V I A G G I

106

T I P O G R A F I A

114

B I B L I O G R A F I A

133

Italy's applied graphic art of the twenties and thirties was exemplary in Europe for its persuasive power. A synthesis of avant garde and vernacular styles reflecting the political and cultural revolutions of the age, Italian graphic style was at once raucous and elegant. While it rejected a great artistic heritage, its roots dug deep into the past.

The *Risorgimento*, or second Italian renaissance, climaxed in 1861 when King Victor Emmanuel II, with the help of guerrilla leader Giuseppe Garibaldi, conquered and unified most of the Italian peninsula's independent city states. But even as Rome was not built in a day, Italy did not mature into statehood overnight. The trappings of nationalism developed slowly, as did an Italian graphic style, which, despite Italy's legacy as the cradle of European humanist art, took shape as a melange of foreign influences until the early twentieth century, when a national identity was forged out of modern art.

Italy's typographic heritage (the Roman letter, the model for the Western world's most significant typefaces, was originally derived from carved inscriptions on the Trajan column, A.D. 114) exerted little obvious influence on the direction of Italian graphic art and design during the late nineteenth century. Rather than build upon the classicism of fifteenth-century Venetian printers or the elegance of the eighteenth-century typographer Giambattista Bodoni, whose *Manuale Tipografico* (1788) was a guide to modern letterforms, Italian typographers and graphic artists turned their attention to French trends, like Post-Impressionism

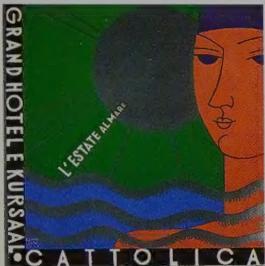
and Art Nouveau. The latter was known in Italy as Stile Liberty, and by the turn of the century this "floreated madness" had pervaded Italian design and architecture.

By the early twentieth century Milan was a crossroads of culture, commerce, and industry. Graphic artists from all over Europe traveled and worked there. Likewise, Italian artists visited the capitals of European modern art — Paris, Berlin, and Vienna — and carried home the Belle Epoch's most emblematic posters and periodicals. Europe's premier art, culture, and satire journals such as Munich's *Jugend* and *Simplicissimus* and London's *Studio* influenced a shift in Italian advertising art from nineteenth-century romantic illustration to twentieth-century objective imagery. These styles also were embraced in response to Italy's late change from an agrarian (and craft-oriented) economy to an industrial one, precipitating the development of commercial markets in Italy and abroad. Around 1900 "the first posters completely designed and composed by Italian artists appeared in Italy," wrote N. G. Fumi, a critic for the English magazine *Commercial Art*. "It is, therefore, not [inappropriate] to say that Italy was one of the last important countries to make use of artistic advertisements." Italy's graphic artists borrowed visual languages as an expedient way to promote Italian products. Yet mimicking European styles was also a step toward developing an indigenous Italian one.

Among the progenitors of modern Italian graphic identity, Leopoldo Metlicovitz (1868–1944) and Adolfo Hohenstein (1854–unknown), both foreign



FIERA DI TRIPOLI
Advertising stamp for fair
1936



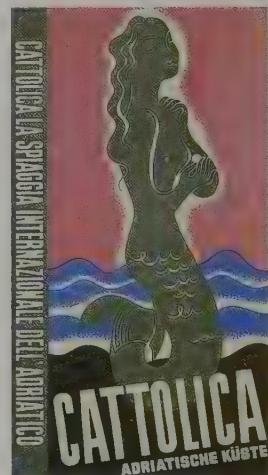
CATTOLICA
Advertisement for
summer resort, c. 1935

born Italians, became masters of the "new manifesti" with styles that drew upon lyrical heroism and organic decoration. As skilled realists they turned the commonplace into allegories: an automobile poster did not show a car but personified speed; a department store ad did not show a garment but celebrated universal beauty. Although their personal styles developed away from French Art Nouveau, they were nevertheless rooted in the aesthetics of the Belle Epoch. Conversely, one of Italy's early modern innovators, Leonetto Cappiello (1875–1942), assimilated his European influences (i.e., Cheret and Lautrec) so well that he might be considered the pioneer of an Italian style. Born in Livorno, Cappiello lived and worked in Paris where he mastered the revolutionary concepts of space and dynamic composition being introduced into French painting. An acerbic caricaturist, he manipulated comic figures that embodied the ideals or essence of a product. Equally influential was Marcello Dudovich (1878–1962) who, though born in Trieste, spent most of his working life in Milan where he practiced a type of Art Nouveau that combined exquisite draftsmanship with elegant styling. His posters of men and women in monumental poses bolstered the identities of such major Italian businesses as La Rinascente department store, Pirelli tires, and Borsalino hats. Another graphic artist of the twenties to contribute to the Italian identity, Marcello Nizzoli (1887–1967), was known for his classically inspired posters for Campari and others. About Nizzoli, N.G. Fuimi commented in *Commercial Art*, "I believe that the reasons for his success are to be found in the fact that he does not borrow from his

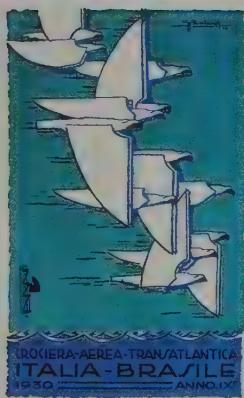
contemporaries, but seeks all his inspiration from our great artists of the past, interpreting their aims with modern feeling."

This could be said about many of the leading names in Italian graphic art who reconciled their heritage with the modern. Not all Italian artists, however, were so responsive to their times. The movement known as "Novecento," which began after World War I under the influence of poet and would-be dictator Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), recalled the grandeur of ancient Rome in literature, painting, graphic art, and architecture. Novecento attempted to mythologize Italian history, and its exponents did succeed in creating a distinctly Italian design style by falsifying tradition. The result was pretentious art. Although Italian commercial art of the teens and early twenties was dominated by Stile Liberty and later Novecento, inventive practitioners tried the contemporary styles being unveiled throughout post-war Europe. The new graphic style known as Art Moderne (or Art Deco, a term coined in the sixties as a contraction of the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris), is referred to by historian Bevis Hillier as "the last of the total styles." A broad-based aesthetic, Art Deco was a synthesis of ancient Greek, Egyptian, and Mayan decorative motifs, Cubist painting, and Machine Age symbols. After 1925 it became the dominant design trend in virtually all the industrialized nations as applied to a wide range of products and forms.

The Italian hybrid of Art Deco graphic design was the offspring of two



CATTOLICA
LA SPIAGGIA INTER-
NAZIONALE DELL'
ADRIATICO
Advertisement for
vacation resort, 1933
Erberto Carboni



CROCIERA AEREA
TRANSATLANTICA
ITALIA - BRASILE
Poster for airline, 1930

volatile parents: Futurism and Fascism — with consumerism serving as its stabilizing grandparent. Futurism, one of the twentieth century's earliest avant garde art movements, was founded in 1909 by F.T. Marinetti, a writer, poet, and painter, whose self-professed mission was to "challenge inertia" through perpetual disruption of the status quo. In poetry this meant replacing conventional verse with explosive rhythms and rhymes (in what he called *parole in liberta* or "words in freedom") that mimicked the sound of machines and weapons. In art this required destroying traditional notions of space and composition in order to express the dynamism of technology. And in typography this resulted in obliterating any semblance of classical symmetry on the printed page. "I am beginning a typographical revolution," wrote Marinetti in one of the movement's many hyperbolic manifestos. "My revolution is against the so called 'typographic harmony of the page,' which stands in direct opposition to the changes of style, moods, etc., which are typical of the style in which the page has been written. That is why we will use three or four different ink colors in the same page, and up to twenty different typefaces when needed." Many of the typefaces used were drawn from seventeenth-century specimen sheets, indicating that even the revolution in design could not be effected overnight.

Like the Futurists, the Italian Fascists were dedicated to violently attacking the ruling monarchy and bourgeoisie who, in the wake of World War I, were accused by nationalists of having sold out the nation to foreign powers. Both

groups — Futurist and Fascist — were committed to social revolution and *Italianismo*. While Marinetti used art (often in concert with bombastic demonstrations) to propagate his vision, Benito Mussolini, a former socialist who switched allegiances to lead the Fascist party, used brute force in terrorizing his opponents. Though not always in agreement, Futurist and Fascist movements literally marched to the same drum in 1919 when they fought in the *Fasco di combattenti*, illegal paramilitary bands who fomented unrest.

The Fascist revolution succeeded without bloodshed when, in 1922, King Victor Emmanuel II succumbed to the threat of a Fascist march on Rome and invited Mussolini to become premier. Many Italians initially viewed Fascism as a first step towards ousting “old mummies and rotten figures,” and so youthful Futurists threw their support behind the new regime by publicizing it in their periodicals, posters, and books. Marinetti held advertising in high regard, and saw its conventions as an effective way to propagate the Futurist faith, hence much of Futurism’s early propaganda was presented in traditional formats. “Marinetti understood the power of advertising,” wrote a critic, “which must reach people at every depth and height, excluding nobody from the social landscape.” Futurists, however, took a more radical step: rather than products they sold ideas — an unprecedented use of advertising that required unprecedented approaches. Soon the Futurists began playing with graphic form. The results were anarchic compositions and symbolic letterforms.



GIORNATA DELL'ALA

Postcard for air show, 1931

Ver

Advertising techniques were adopted for use in other European avant garde movements during the 1920s. Dutch De Stijl, German Bauhaus and Dada, and Russian Constructivism all followed Marinetti's lead. All published self-promotional literature, designed books, and subsequently influenced radical changes in mainstream design practices. Nevertheless, these movements were kept out of the mainstream. The Constructivists played a role in the Soviet propaganda machine until they were superseded in the late 1920s by Stalin's Socialist Realism. The Futurists were favored as long as they concentrated on Mussolini's key objective, the creation of a Fascist image, but their vehement attacks on Italian traditions made them a thorn in the side of most Fascists, many of whom preferred Novecento. One member of the ruling council attacked them as "nothing but a group of poor little students [who] ran away from Jesuit school, who made some noise in the nearby woods and then had to be brought back home by [their] guardian."

TRIENNALE
D'OLTREMARE
Poster for nationalist
celebration, c. 1940
Cella



Despite the Futurists' devotion to industry, they were held in contempt by industrialists. With few exceptions, most Futurist advertising was used either as self-promotion or by adventuresome companies. "It is easy to imagine how the Futurists, considering themselves as the first and most audacious apologists of industrial society, must have encountered a certain frustration . . . for not having been fully used by the fields of applied arts and industry," wrote Claudia Salaris in *Il Futurismo e la Pubblicità* (Luptetti & Co., 1988). Indeed it was a struggle to convince business that these unprecedented approaches were advantageous. One

supporter of Futurist design wrote about the need to influence Italian business this way: "It is necessary to force the industrialists to understand that a good poster and a good concept [must] generate . . . from the very modern brain of new men — everyone of them full of the dynamic and fast mechanism of our time, and capable of the most daring experiments of color and design." In the end, certain Futurist aesthetics were imitated by non-Futurist designers.

Image was the heart of Fascist politics, and graphic design was its backbone. Mussolini often became an art director when in detailed memoranda he criticized subordinates for their poor use of type or the placement of banners and posters. Yet in the early years of his regime he allowed artists leeway in the development of a Fascist style — hence the coexistence of Futuristic, Art Moderne, and Novecento approaches in art and architecture. "We must not take advantage of our heritage from the past," wrote Mussolini. "We must create a new heritage to be connected to the old one, creating a new art, an art of our times, a Fascist art." Ultimately, however, compromise came, at the expense of the avant garde when the dynamic aspects of Futurism were incorporated into an Italian Art Deco.

For a regime that promoted a cult of youth, the streamlined — or futuristic — aspects of Art Deco were the perfect vehicle for mythic depiction, and the air-brush was the best tool for achieving blemish-free effects. Art Deco expressed romanticism in its smooth surfaces and monumentalism in its rectilinear forms. Deco depictions of Fascist blackshirts made thugs look snappy and stylish. Even



CALZA LA D
Poster for stockings, 1932



LE STRADE STATALI
D'ITALIA

Road map, 1934
E.V. Testi

the faces, the charged emblem of the Fascist regime taken from ancient Roman iconography, was often streamlined through Art Deco conceit to symbolize the futuristic ideals of the party.

Italian Art Deco was not only manifest in political imagery but was propagated through design and printing trade journals and exhibitions aimed at designers working for industry and commerce. In the late twenties the Futurists did their best to influence these designers through manifestos like "Futurism and Advertising" (1932), by Fortunato Depero (1892–1960), Futurism's most dedicated advertising designer, who asserted that "the art of the future will be mainly advertising." Ambitious exhibitions of publicity were common; at the 1928 Futurist Festival, Enrico Prampolini designed an advertising pavilion. Other periodicals used to propagate modernity included Milan's *L'Ufficio Moderno – La Pubblicità*, which critiqued the latest design trends. *Graphicus*, published in Turin at the same time, was moderately progressive in its attempts to reconcile the Modern and modernistic. Beginning in 1937 the Fascist Syndicate for Advertising published *La Pubblicità d'Italia*, which set standards that indicated a preference for the modernistic over the Modern, but gradually programmed a stylistic shift toward Fascist realism. In contrast to official Fascist preferences, *Campo Grafico*, a decidedly progressive technical review, started in 1933, was rooted in Bauhaus principles and proffered a distinctly rationalist method (marking the ascendancy of the graphic designer over the painter) that became dominant after World War II.

Campo Grafico promoted a canon of composition consistent with the New Typography and “a mechanical art for a mechanical age” (i.e., photographs should replace painting), but action was taken by only a few intrepid designers, most notably in the layouts of the architecture magazine *Casabella*, or practiced by the members of Milan’s Studio Boggeri. By the mid-thirties, mainstream Italian graphic design was ostensibly modernistic; it remained image-oriented and display types influenced by Futurism were common, including hand-drawn letterforms that accentuated the improvisational.

The evolution of Italian Art Deco from Futurism and Art Moderne took a decade or so to achieve, reaching its peak around 1939 when the demands of Mussolini’s imperialism and the looming war forced a shift in design policy to decidedly unambiguous propaganda. Art Deco, perfect in peacetime for lulling Italians into a false security, and into accepting Fascism as a benevolent regime, was inappropriate when Mussolini demanded sacrifice and discipline.

From the beginning the Nazis forced all German artists to conform to rigid National Socialist standards, while the Fascists tolerated design pluralism as long as the symbols of the regime were not violated. What distinguishes Italian graphic design between the wars from other totalitarian countries was a modicum of individuality. In the final analysis, Italian Art Deco — futuristic and raucous, classic and monumental, humorous and hyperbolic — represented the spirit of the era, and all its contradictions.

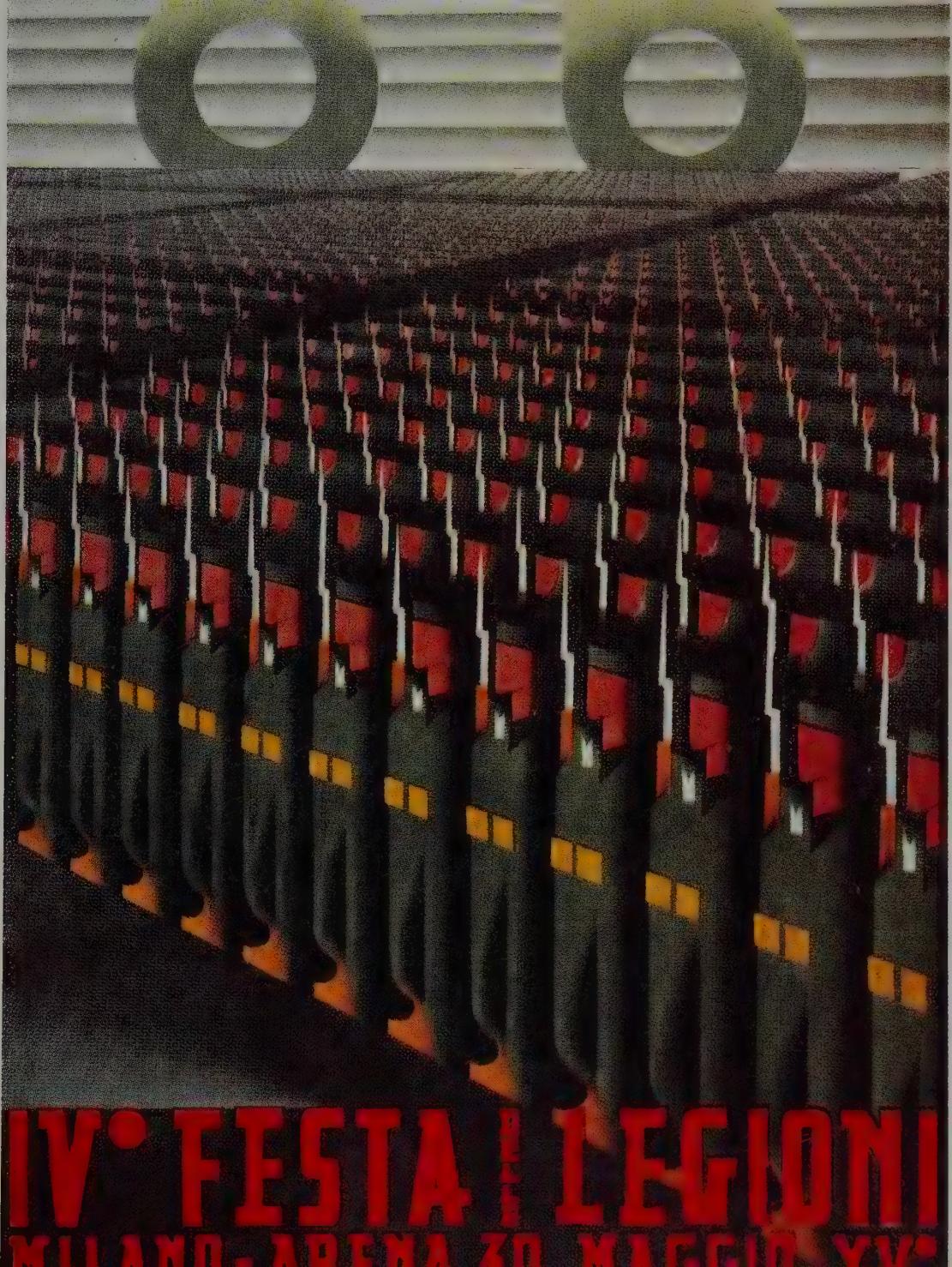


FIERA DI VIENNA
Advertising stamp for fair
1936

PROPAGANDA
ANTITUBERCOLARE
Poster for tuberculosis
prevention, c. 1934
Latin

The radical agendas of Constructivism and the Bauhaus caused Stalin to end one and Hitler to close the other. Mussolini did not suppress the Futurists but reconciled the needs of his regime with their value as visual propagandists able to synthesize the avant garde and modernistic. In 1923 he wrote, "I don't want to encourage anything that can be similar to an 'Art of the State.'" Nevertheless he understood that a Fascist identity combining classicism and modernism would appeal to old and young; especially the youths at whom Fascist mythology was directed. Mussolini wanted a Fascist image that reflected Roman glory yet symbolized the future. "He grasped intuitively that an image is built from the bottom up," writes historian Gian Paolo Ceserani, "by what happens on a day-to-day basis — with the road signs, the buildings, and emblems." In 1921 thirty percent of all Italians were illiterate, and graphic images were the most effective way of addressing them. Mussolini saw Italians as "political consumers," and as Fascism's "creative director" he controlled their behavior through slogans and symbols.

OPERA BALILLA
Poster for Fascist
organization, 1941
Franco Signorini



IV° FESTA DELLE LEGIONI
MILANO - ARENA ZU MARECCHIO - VEN



IL LIBRO DELLA II[^] CLASSE

Textbook cover, 1932

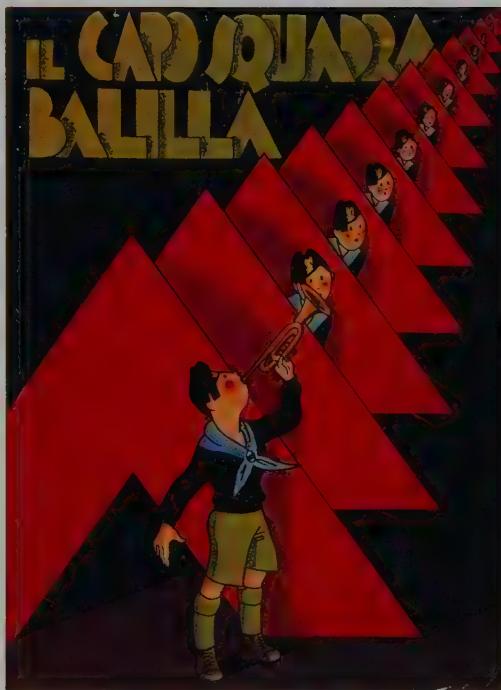
Mario Pompei



QUADERNO

Notebook cover, c. 1939

A. Rigorini



IL CAPO SQUADRA BALILLA

Cover for Fascist youth handbook, 1935

Zedda



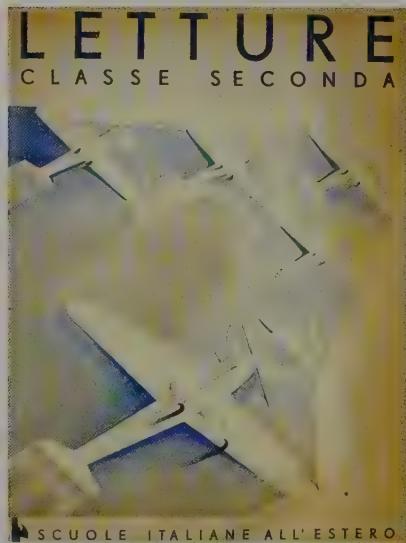
STORIA E GEOGRAFIA

Textbook cover, 1933

LETTURE CLASSE SECONDA

Textbook cover, 1932

Angelo Della Torre



SCUOLE ITALIANE ALL'ESTERO

MACEDONIA

EXTRA

"La sigaretta di gran classe, squisita miscela di tabacchi orientali."

MACEDONIA
Cigarette advertisement,
c. 1935



ALLA A - DELLA Z
Textbook pages, 1935
C.V. Testi

fascio

Tra nel grande distene d'Italia
fiamma, che avanza,
forza che stampa
il suo passo di orgoglio vittoriosa
nel nome della Patria radiosa.

Un giorno a fumante
su tutte le strade
avanza e lontano,
la gioventù si mosca
con cuore guerriero
dalle sue condizioni
in Roma, con chiusa la porta
e sempre l'irrigua la morte,
che muore, si rinnova,
e con i venti giri
attraversa il mondo,
che non bappa, già nata, già dura!

Fu messa così nella storia
m'ira nello glorioso.
e Roma la marca fatata
per suo dominio univerale
nel sole riposa,
apre le strade del mondo
per libra, per marci, per arte profonda.

Janco fede nel proprio destino,
fiamma, che avanza,
fiamma, che stampa,
il suo passo di orgoglio vittoriosa
nel nome della Patria radiosa.

Le donne ed i bambini attendono sulla
riva il ritorno dei pescatori e fanno festa
alle ceste di pesce che sembrano colme d'oro
e d'argento: oro ed argento che non arricchiscono però il pescatore. Egli resta povero,
ma anche il suo duro lavoro, la sua barca ed il
mare dal quale non potrebbe vivere lo stanno.

L' OFFICINA

L'officina è lontana dal
cuore della città: sta in una
di quelle strade che
sboccano nei campi. È
chiusa tutt'intorno da



46

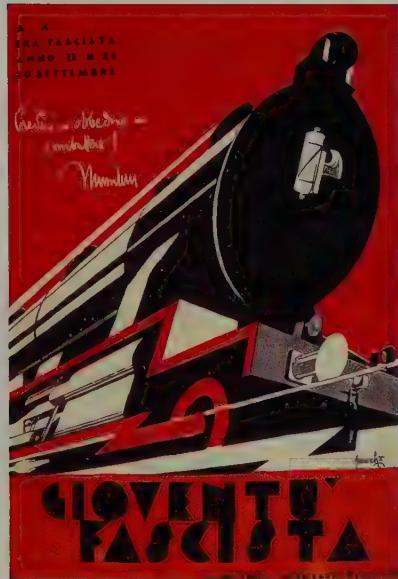
un alto muro e da fuori si vede
solo un altissimo cammo che sembra
voglia toccare il cielo.

Ogni mattina dal grande portone
entrambi centinaia di operai, poi il
grande portone si richiude.

Gli operai prendono posto vicino
alle macchine. Come sono belle!
Muovono grandi ruote, alzano ed abbassano gigantesche braccia di ferro,
rombano, stridono, sembrano vive.

Le macchine sono veramente forti e potenti, fanno
in un attimo il lavoro di
cento, braccia. Pure, senza
l'operario che le mette in
moto e le sorveglia, le mac-
chine, dà sole, sarebbero
inutili.





GIOVENTÙ FASCISTA
Magazine cover, 1932

GIOVENTÙ FASCISTA
Magazine cover, 1931
Cesare Gobbo



GIOVENTÙ FASCISTA
Magazine cover, 1932

GIOVENTÙ FASCISTA
Magazine cover, 1931
Cesare Gobbo



ANNO X OND

Poster for athletic

competition, 1932

G. Pessani







BONIFICA INTEGRALE

Book illustration, 1932

A. Calzavara

CONTRO LA TUBERCOLOSI

Diploma, c. 1938

Giuseppe Latini



OPERA BALILLA

Report card, 1944

RICOSTRUZIONI ZONE DI GUERRA

Book illustration, 1933

A. Calzavara





MOSTRA DELLA
RIVOLUZIONE FASCISTA
Exhibition poster, 1933
C.V. Testi



MOSTRA NAZIONALE DEL GRANO
Exhibition poster, 1932
Marcello Nizzoli

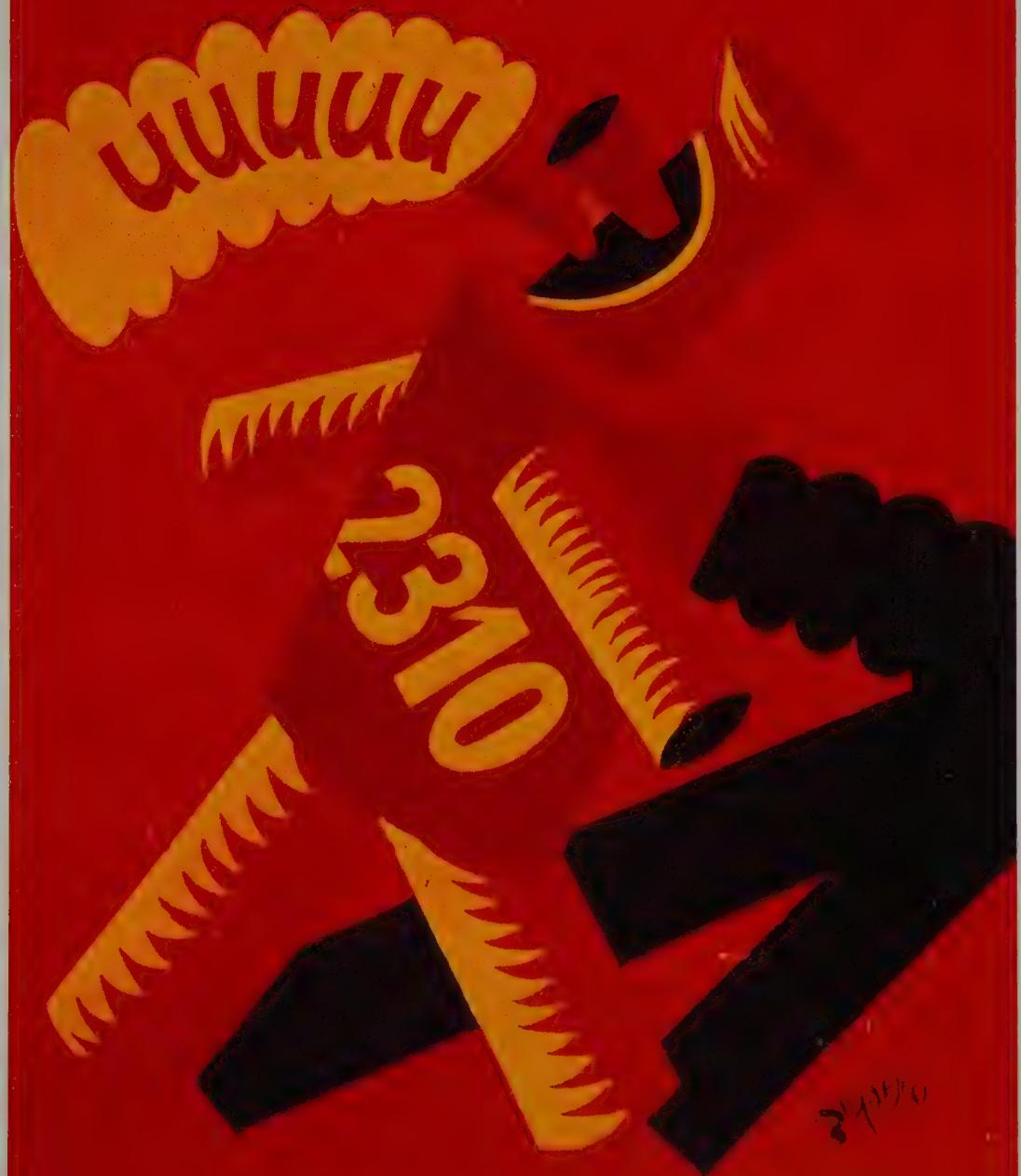


Italian culture between the wars was not rooted in the artistic heritage of humanist art and architecture from the Renaissance, but developed out of twentieth-century rebellion. Throughout Europe modernist vanguards were attacking archaic political, social, and cultural institutions. No movement was more fervent than the Italian Futurists and their attacks on timeworn ideas. Speed symbolized progress; and the engine became the icon of rebirth. The Futurists devised new images and graphic forms to represent a cultural vision that was inextricably wed to their social one. Marinetti believed in "life as art," the total integration of day-to-day reality and the creative process. Hierarchies imposed by the old cultural elite, targeted for destruction, were to be replaced by social equality: "To communicate [efficiently] it is necessary to talk to the masses, not just the individual." This maxim, promoted in the "Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe" (1932) was perpetuated in periodicals. Yet despite their sincere attempts, what the Futurists called mass art was not necessarily consistent with what the masses needed or wanted.

NUOVO TEATRO
FUTURISTA

Theater poster, 1924

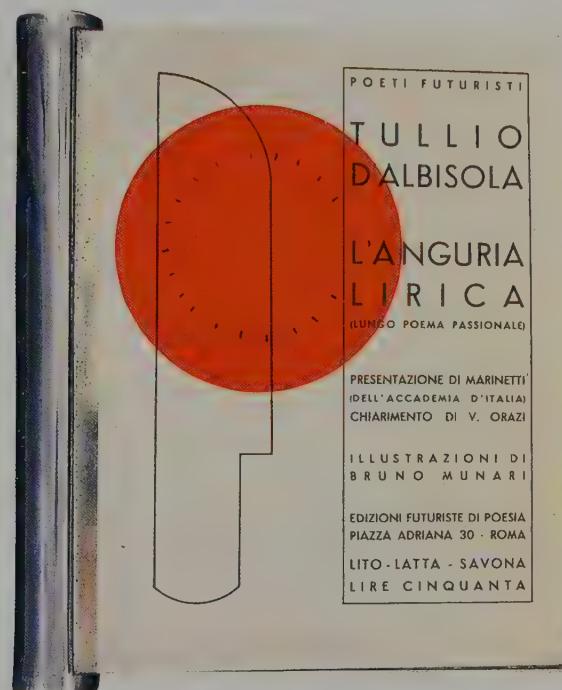
Fortunato Depero





MARINETTI: PAROLE
IN LIBERTÀ FUTURISTE
Book cover and inside pages, 1932
Tulia D'Albisola





TULLIO D'ALBISOLA
Book cover and inside pages, 1934
Bruno Munari





ANNO I - N. 2 - AGOSTO 1934-XII - C. C. CON LA POSTA - L. 3

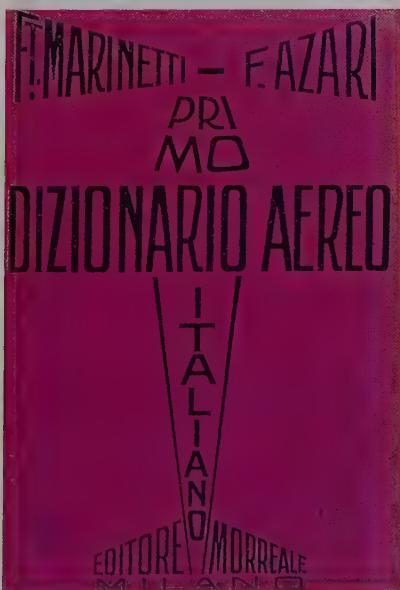
STILE FUTURISTA

Magazine cover, 1934

V. Pozzo

DIZIONARIO AEREO

Book jacket, 1925



SCATOLE D'AMORE

BY F.T. MARINETTI

Book cover, c. 1932

Ivo Pannaggi



SERIE II - ANNO I - N. 1 - APRILE 1923 Costo corrisponde postale UN FASCICOLO Un 3

NOI # 1

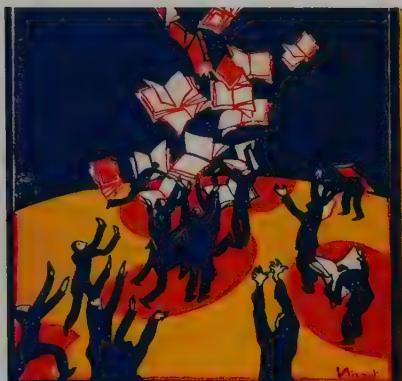
Magazine cover, 1923

Enrico Prampolini

FUTURISMO

Newspaper front page, 1933





MODERNISSIMA
CASA EDITRICE ITALIANA
CATALOGO 1920

MODERNISSIMA
Catalog cover, 1920
Marcello Nizzoli

ASSOC. UNIVERSITARIA PARMENSE
Calendar, 1926
Erberto Carboni

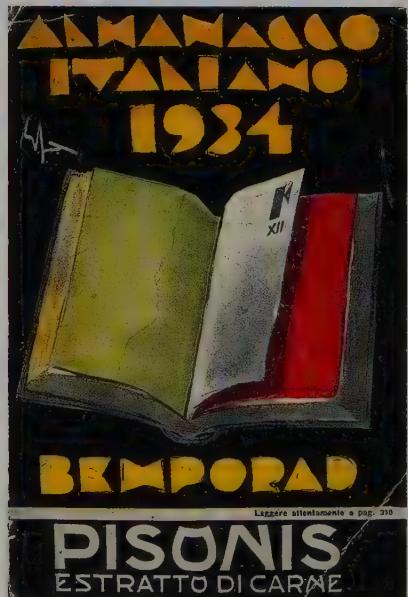


IL MIO & IL TUO
Sheet music, 1930
Bonfanti



1931
Calendar
G. Acquaviva

ALMANACCO ITALIANO
Almanac cover, 1934

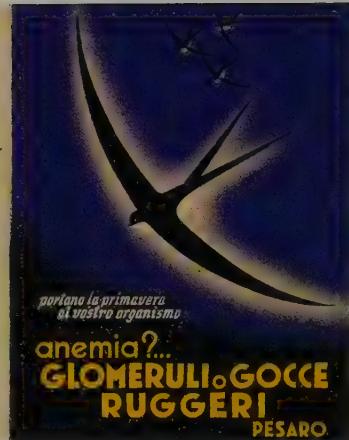


BEMPORAD
Leggere attentamente a pag. 110
PISONIS
ESTRATTO DI CARNE





BERTELLI
Calendar, 1937
F. Romoli



GLOMERULI O GOCCE RUGGERI
Calendar, 1935
G. Guillermaz



BERTELLI
Calendar, 1932



BERTELLI
Calendar, 1936



COLLI FIORITI

Calendar, 1933

Alfredo Cavadin



OPSO PARMA

Calendar, 1932

Erberto Carboni



BERTELLI

Calendar, 1939

F. Romoli



TENDENZE SPORTIVE

Calendar, 1935



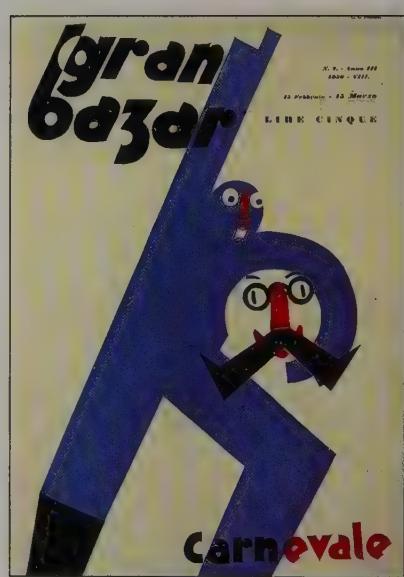
LA BORSA
Magazine cover, 1936
Mario Sironi



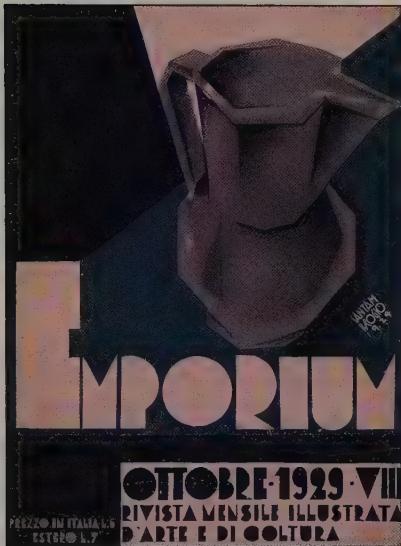
NATURA
Magazine cover, 1932
Paolo Garretto



**IL GIORNALINO
DELLA DOMENICA**
Magazine cover, 1929
B.Ottonelli



GRAN BAZAR
Magazine cover, 1930
Lucio Venna



EMPORIUM

Magazine cover, 1929

Santam Brogio

LA RIVISTA

Magazine cover, 1933

Fortunato Depero



SECOLO XX

Magazine cover, 1928

Tio



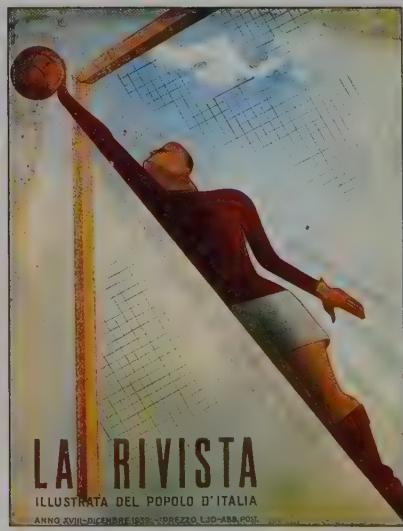
EMPORIUM

Magazine cover, 1928

LA RIVISTA

Magazine cover, 1939

Paolo Garretto





SEGNILIBRI
Bookmarks, 1930s





LA CITTÀ DI ABACO

Children's book (front and back cover), 1928

Antonio Rubino



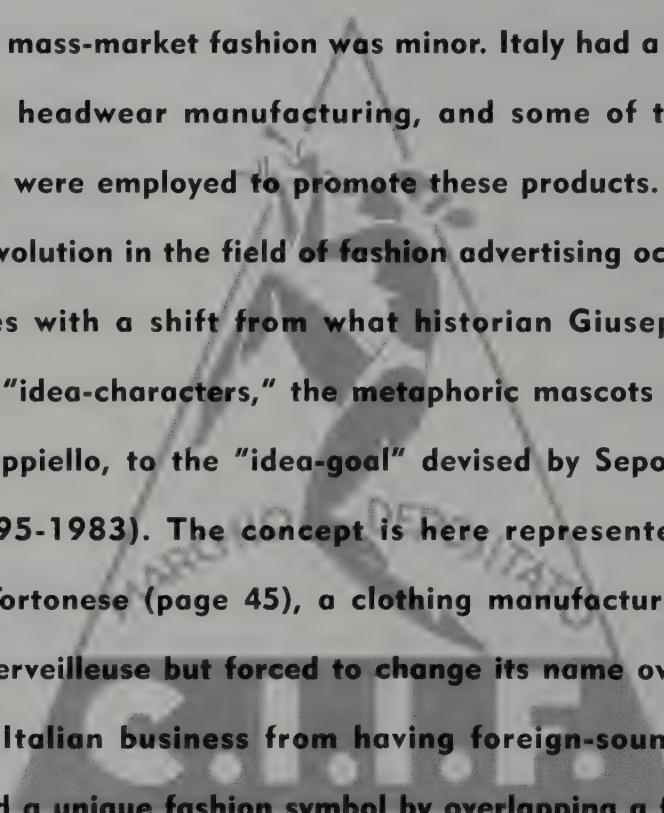
L'ARCO DEI SETTE COLORI

Children's book (front and back cover), 1928

Antonio Rubino



Futurist fashion designers produced garments and textiles with outrageous graphics, such as Fortunato Depero's vest (page 44), but their influence on mass-market fashion was minor. Italy had a long tradition of shoe and headwear manufacturing, and some of the country's finest artists were employed to promote these products. Nevertheless, a graphic revolution in the field of fashion advertising occurred in the late twenties with a shift from what historian Giuseppe Priarone refers to as "idea-characters," the metaphoric mascots pioneered by Leonetto Cappiello, to the "idea-goal" devised by Sepo (né Severo Pozzati, 1895-1983). The concept is here represented by Sepo's poster for Tortonese (page 45), a clothing manufacturer (originally called La Merveilleuse but forced to change its name owing to a law prohibiting Italian business from having foreign-sounding names). Sepo created a unique fashion symbol by overlapping a female figure with a mannequin, whose shape is formed by a ribbon. The poster reveals the confluence of Art Moderne styling and Cubist composition common to much Italian graphic design.



BIANCO

Department store
advertisement, 1926
Seko



PARANASS

IL SOPRABITO IMPERMEABILE PER TUTTI I TEMPI

PARANASS

Raincoat label, 1931

MALÚ

Clothes label, 1938



BORRI

Shoe label, 1928

PANICOTTO FUTURISTA

Vest, 1923-4

Fortunato Depero



CLAUDIO

Clothes label, 1941



tortonese
TORINO

TORTONESE
Poster for clothing store, 1934
Sepo



PER LA DONNA

D'ITALIA

VIA CAOUR-15

TORINO

Sepo-54

LA TESSILE

Retail catalog cover,

1933

G. Podsiiri



te suti
confezioni
sartoria



LA TESSILE
PIAZZA CORDVIO MILANO

LA PIÙ GRANDE CASA DI TEVVIL PER SIGNORI E PER WOMAN



IVOREA

Rayon label, 1933



QUINTE

Label for shoes, c. 1930

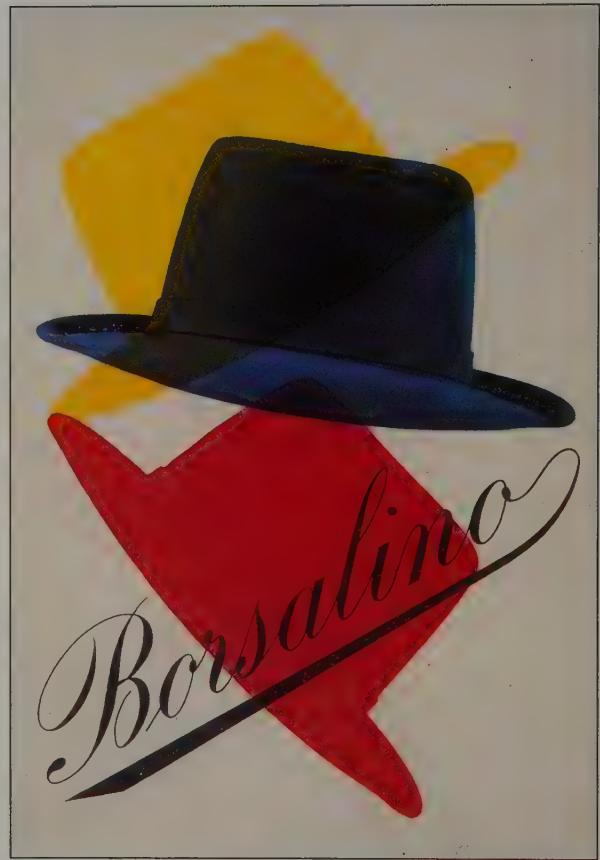


RIVELLA

Advertisement for furs, 1932
Erberto Carboni



CERVO
Poster for rainhat, 1935
Gino Boccasile



BORSALINO
Poster for hats, c. 1938

LORD

Poster for hats, 1930

Paolo Garretto



LORD



GOLF
Clothes logo, 1931

AMARO GAMBAROTTA
Advertisement for tuxedo, 1928
Saxida



ADORNIA
Button manufacturer logo, 1934
Enrico Stern

NOVELTEX
Poster for shirt collars, 1930
Sepo



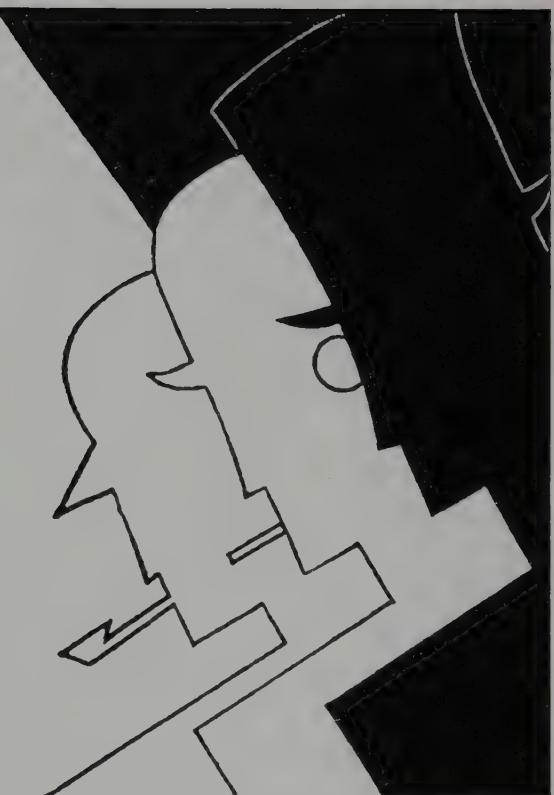
SAIRA

Advertisement for fabric, 1936

REM

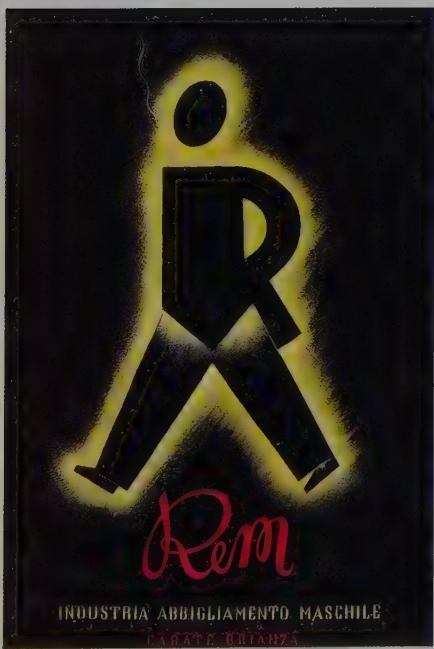
Poster for clothes, c. 1935

A. Berretti



LUIGI BIANCHI

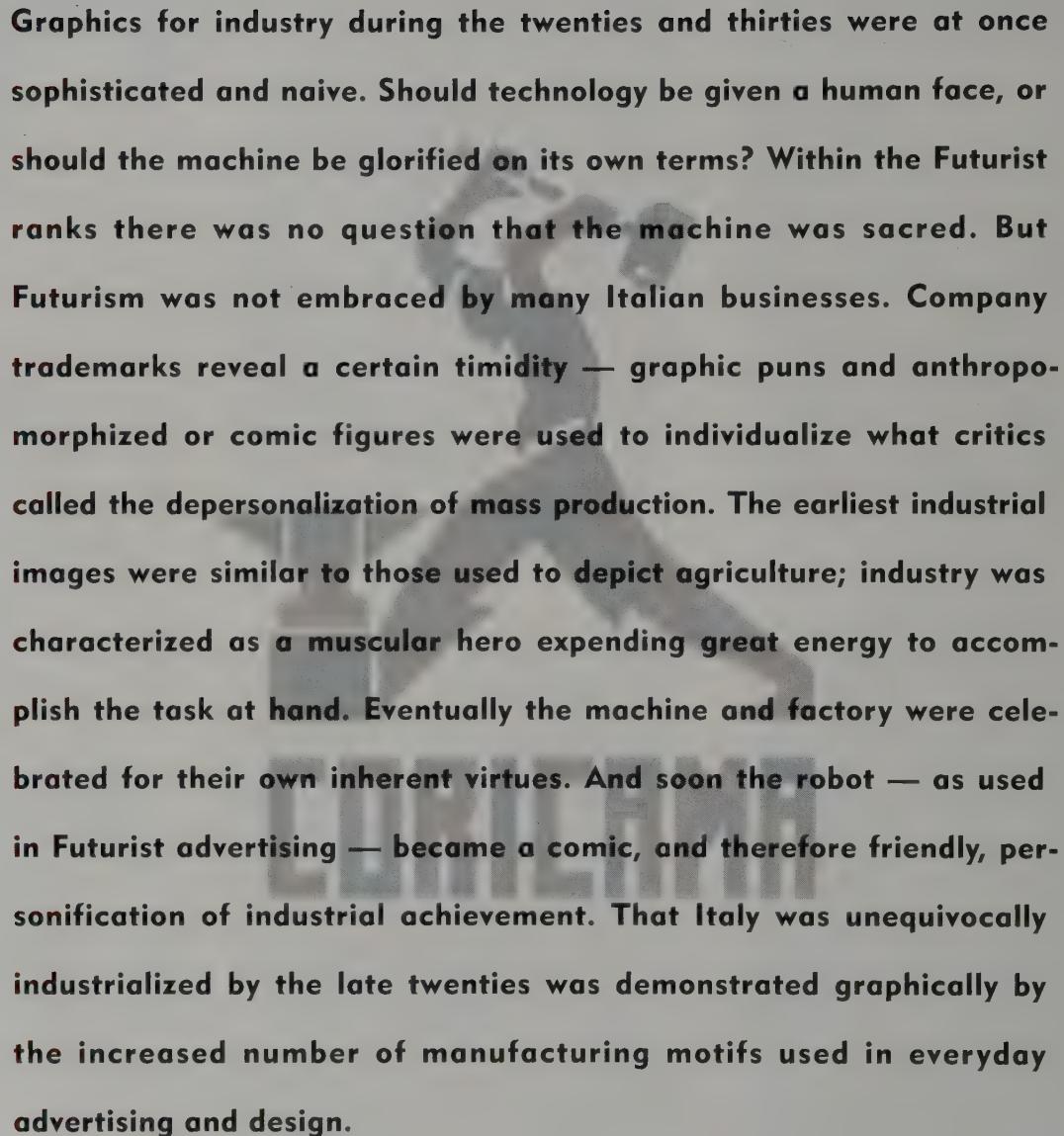
Clothes logo, 1941



PAOLO ZALVIN

Clothes logo, 1929





Graphics for industry during the twenties and thirties were at once sophisticated and naive. Should technology be given a human face, or should the machine be glorified on its own terms? Within the Futurist ranks there was no question that the machine was sacred. But Futurism was not embraced by many Italian businesses. Company trademarks reveal a certain timidity — graphic puns and anthropomorphized or comic figures were used to individualize what critics called the depersonalization of mass production. The earliest industrial images were similar to those used to depict agriculture; industry was characterized as a muscular hero expending great energy to accomplish the task at hand. Eventually the machine and factory were celebrated for their own inherent virtues. And soon the robot — as used in Futurist advertising — became a comic, and therefore friendly, personification of industrial achievement. That Italy was unequivocally industrialized by the late twenties was demonstrated graphically by the increased number of manufacturing motifs used in everyday advertising and design.

ARGO

"RIV."

RIV

Poster for ball bearings,
c. 1925
Pluto



V & D

Advertisement for
manufacturer, 1924
Fortunato Depero





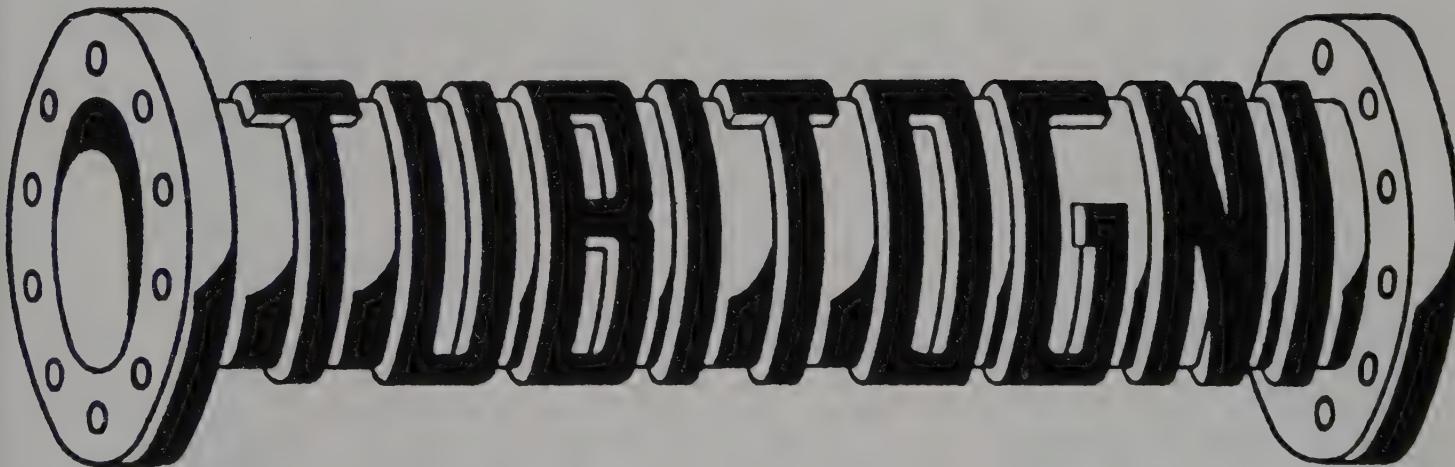
RADIO PERFECTA

Radio logo, 1928



A. PALMIERI

Paint logo, 1932



TUBITOGNI

Pipe logo, 1929



SOCIETÀ ANONIMA CURTI

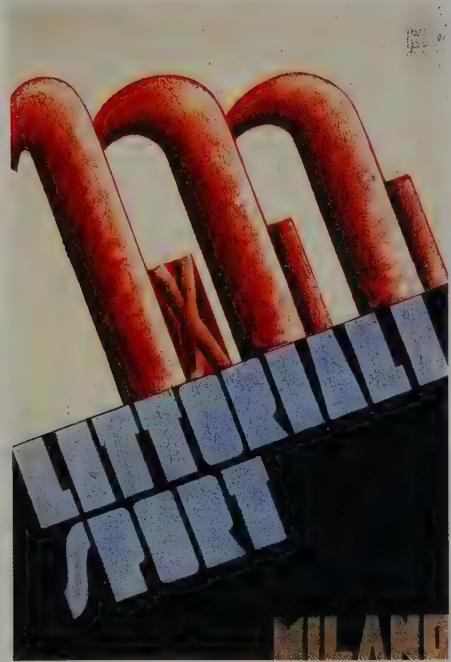
Factory logo, 1930

ASTRALUX

Lamp logo, 1934

Emilio Zava





LITTORIALI SPORT

Postcard for sports fair, 1934

Latis



4[^] FIERA INTERNAZIONALE
DEL LIBRO

Poster stamp for book fair, 1931

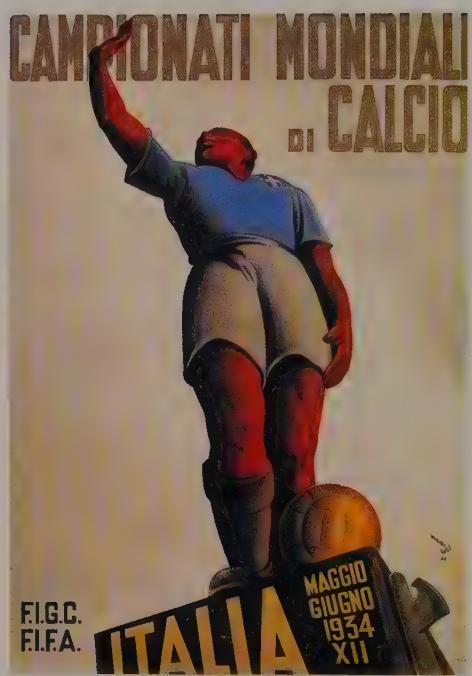
Ninoz



XII FIERA DI PADOVA

Poster stamp for city fair 1930

Lucio Venna



CAMPIONATI MONDIALI DI CALCIO

Poster for soccer game, 1934

Mario Gros

FIERA DI FIUME

Postcard for city fair,

1929



A stylized silhouette of a building with multiple towers and a central dome, rendered in white against a dark blue background.

FIERA DI FIUME

Whele

14 AGOSTO 1929
1 SETTEMBRE 1929

STOFFE

Sketch for poster for fabric
manufacturer, 1933
Ivo Pannaggi





MATA

Insecticide logo, c. 1943



ALBERTO ZANOLLI

Postcard for printer, 1930
Erberto Carboni

TAPPETI DI LINOLEUM

Advertisement for linoleum, 1940
Giaci Mondaini



PICATOR

Insecticide logo, 1933





MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
DELLE INDUSTRIE DEL CUOIO
Poster stamp for exhibition, 1931
Marcello Nizzoli

FIERA NAZIONALE
DELL' ARTIGIANATO
Postcard for fair, 1937
Giovanni Cappelli



ESTATE FRIULANA
Poster for festival, 1935
U. Grignaschi



VIA MOSTRA
MERCATO

Postcard for fair, 1936
Giuseppe Riccobaldi

VI MOSTRA MERCATO.

50%
RIDI
ZIONI

FER
ROVIA
RIE

1936
ANNO
XIV



DEI

ARTIGIANATO
FIRENZE 26 APRILE - 9 MAGGIO



SCREMIN

Postcard for furniture company, 1929

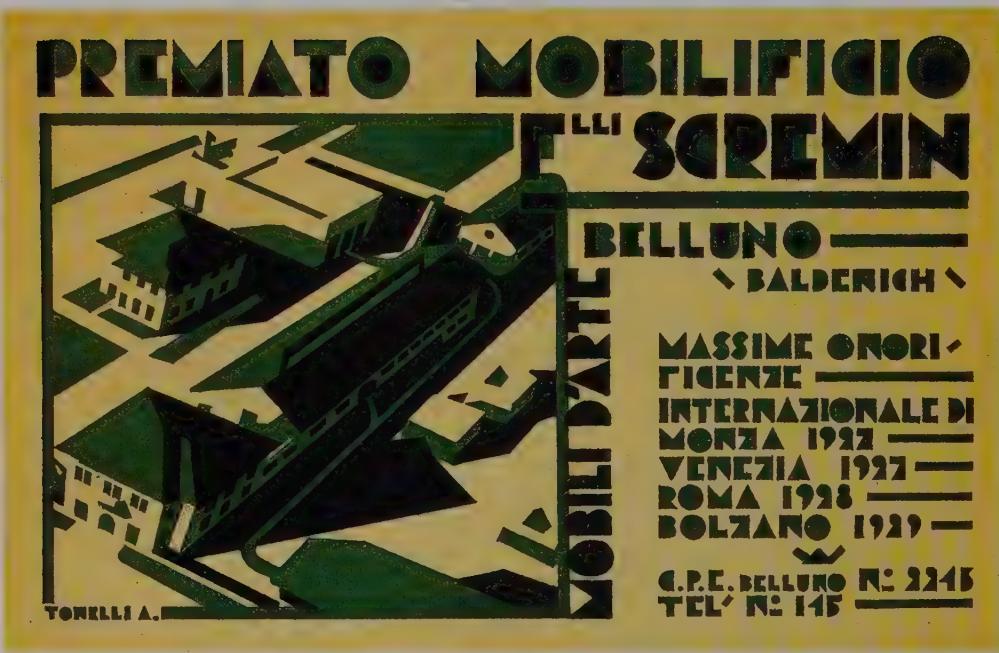
Tonelli

GNUDI

Poster stamp for furniture

manufacturer, 1924

Atla



SIRTOLI

Moving announcement
for a printer, 1934





CANTÙ ALLA FIERA DI MILANO

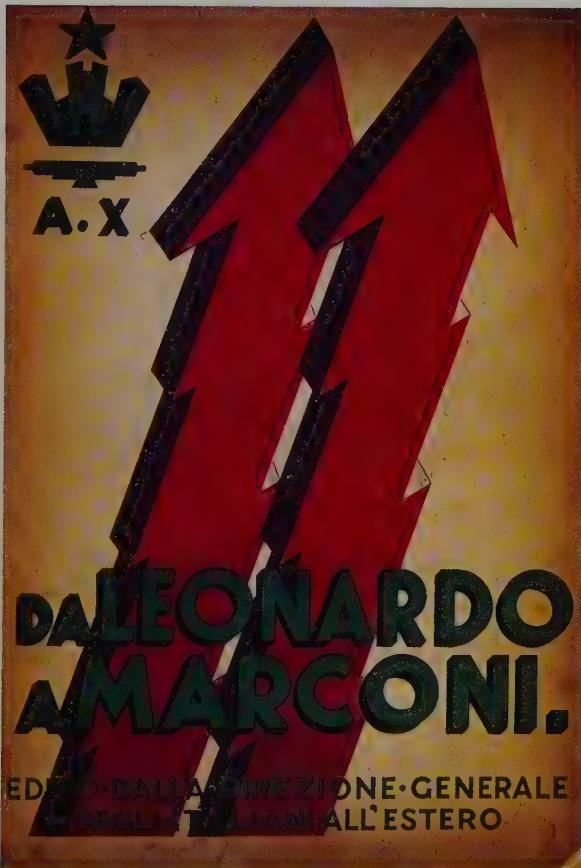
Postcard for fair, 1934



LUBRIFICANTI FIAT

Advertisement for motor oil, 1930

Marcello Nizzoli



DA LEONARDO A MARCONI

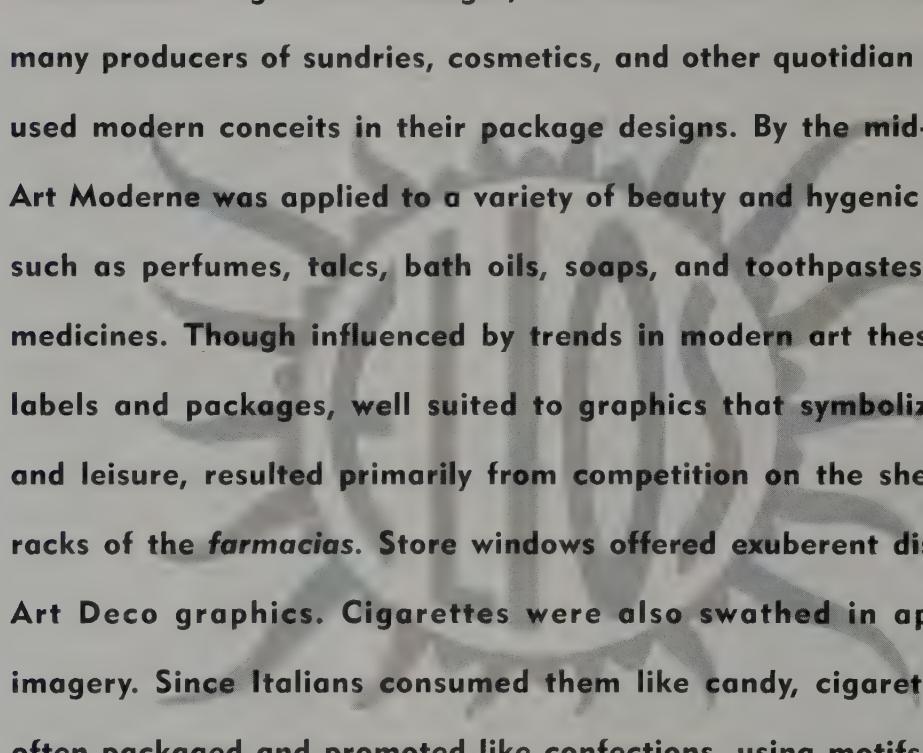
Textbook cover, 1932



MOSTRA DELLA LUCE

Postcard for exhibition, 1933

Virgilio Retrosi



Making art reflect aspects of everyday life was not as revolutionary as the Futurists might have thought, for around the turn of the century many producers of sundries, cosmetics, and other quotidian products used modern conceits in their package designs. By the mid-twenties Art Moderne was applied to a variety of beauty and hygenic products, such as perfumes, talcs, bath oils, soaps, and toothpastes — even medicines. Though influenced by trends in modern art these stylish labels and packages, well suited to graphics that symbolize luxury and leisure, resulted primarily from competition on the shelves and racks of the *farmacias*. Store windows offered exuberent displays of Art Deco graphics. Cigarettes were also swathed in appealing imagery. Since Italians consumed them like candy, cigarettes were often packaged and promoted like confections, using motifs that suggested both adventure and chic. Delightful product graphics were applied to stationery and writing implements as well. Imaginatively designed pen-nib and pencil boxes brightened up the shelves and diverted the consumer's eye.

OVENALL

Poster for toothpaste, 1942

Zoltan Tamasi

OVENALL

CANTELE
Bath oil label, 1929

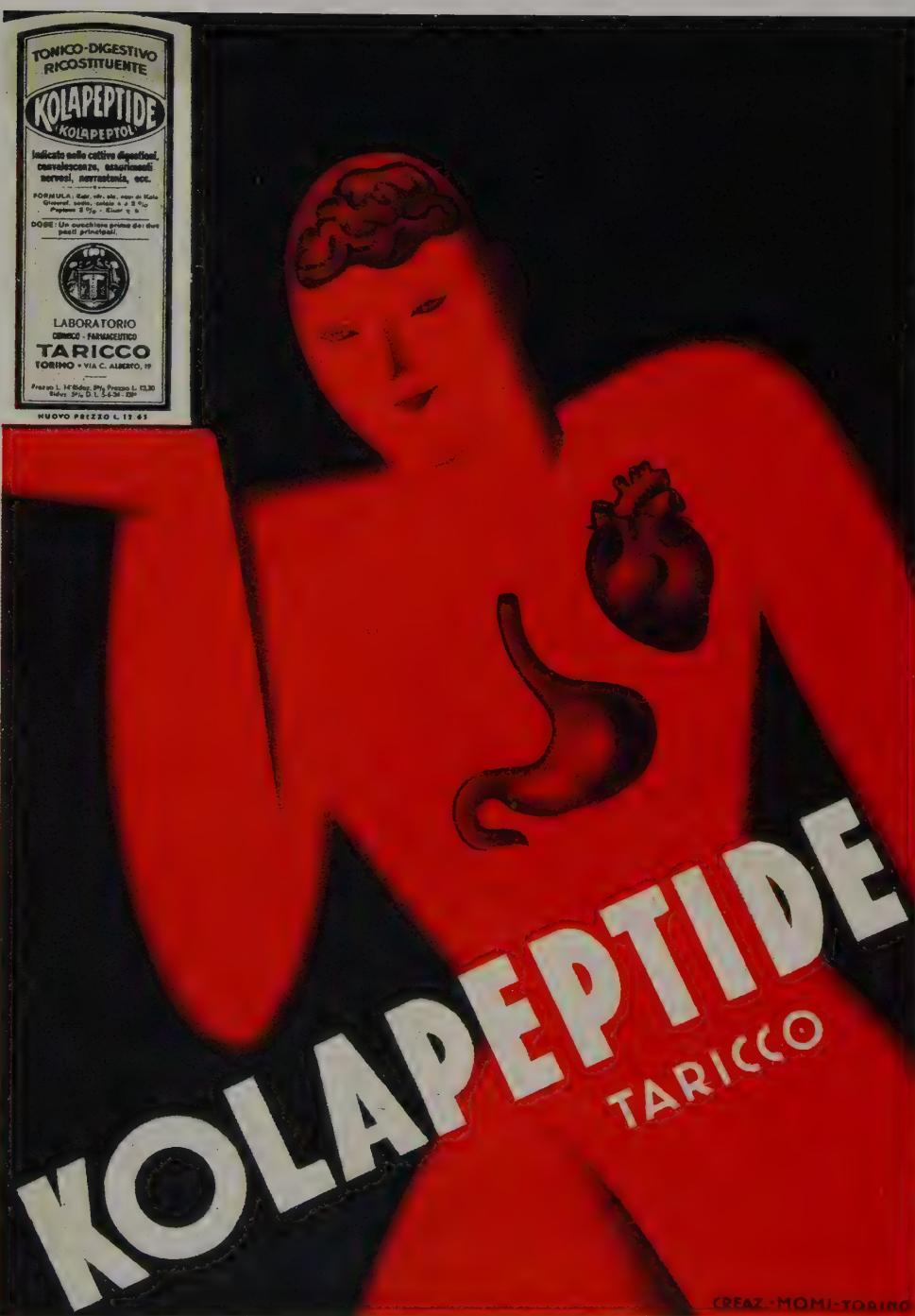


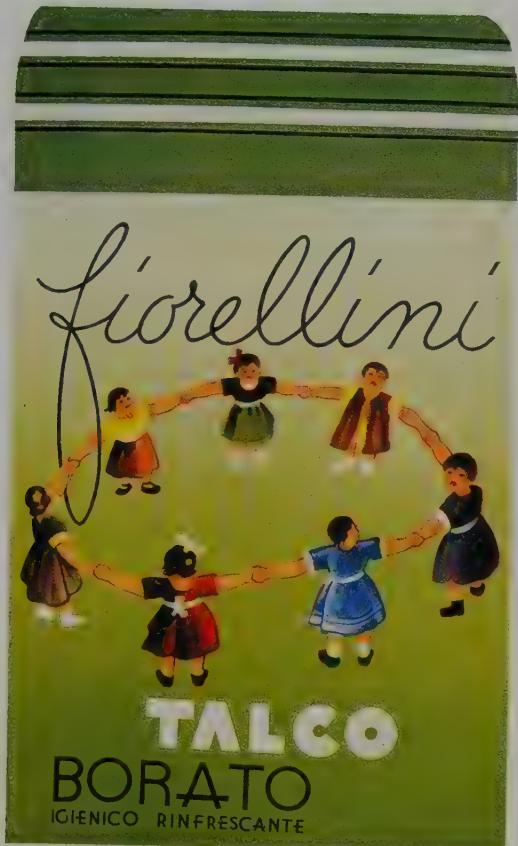
BERTONI
Package for toothpaste, 1933



KOLAPEPTIDE
Advertisement for tonic, 1937

TERGOL
Feminine hygiene product, 1929



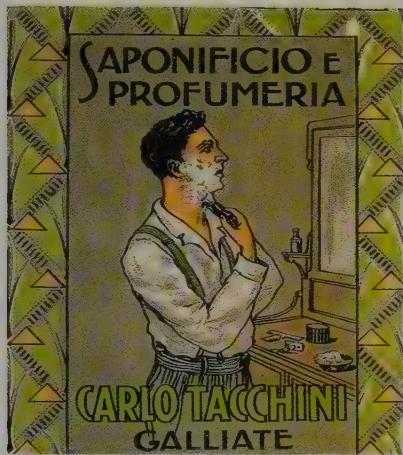


FIORELLINI
Talc label, c. 1940

CIPRIA DORIA
Powder label, c. 1935



LINETTI
Perfume package, c. 1935



CARLO TACCHINI
Shaving cream label, 1928



SAPONE
BEBÉ
NEUTRO SPECIALE



PETALIA
Powder package, 1928

S.A. ANTONIO GALLO
LABORATORIO FARMACEUTICO
MILANO



SALUS·EGROTI
SUPREMA·CURA

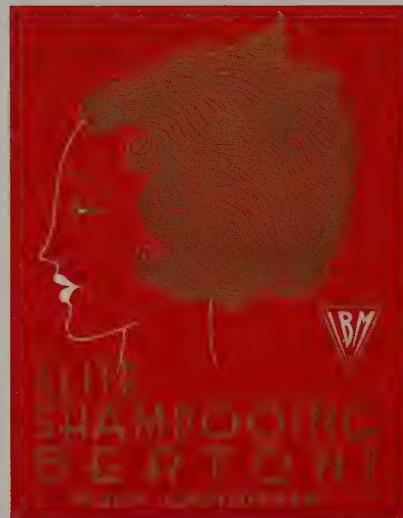
S. A. ANTONIO
Tonic label, 1934

OSSIGENAL
Bath oil label, 1937





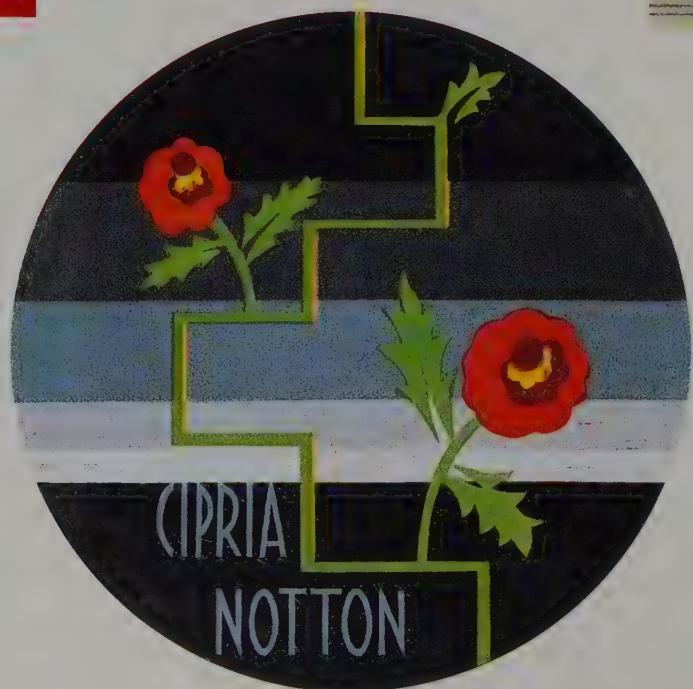
CELLA



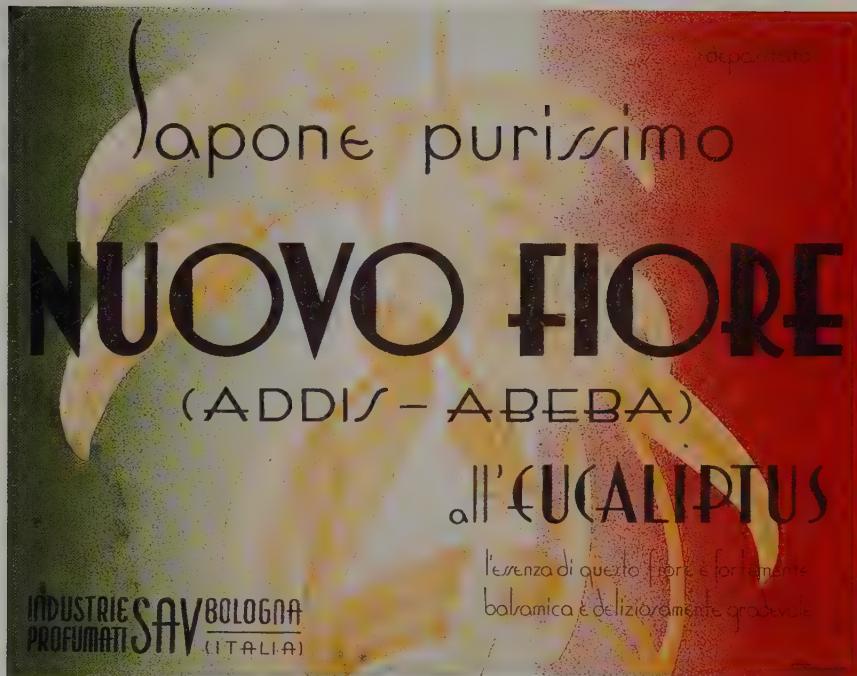
BERTONI
Shampoo label, 1935



LILIA
Powder label, 1935



CIPRIA NOTTON
Powder package, 1935



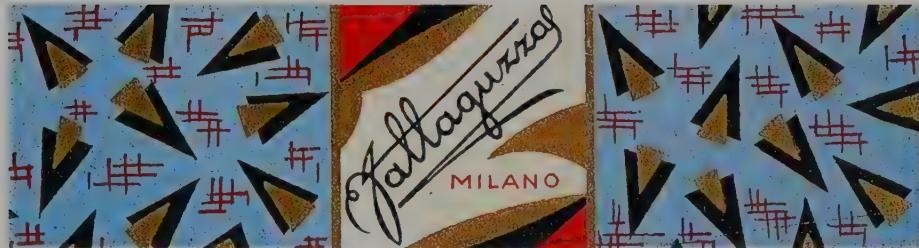
NUOVO FIORE
Soap label, 1936



MERYBELL
Perfume label, 1936



PROFUMI
Various perfume labels, c. 1930



TOSI
Perfume label, 1924



SOLE
Soap label, 1937



GISBERTO VALLAGUZZA
Powder label, c. 1934





RUDY

Lipstick label, 1937



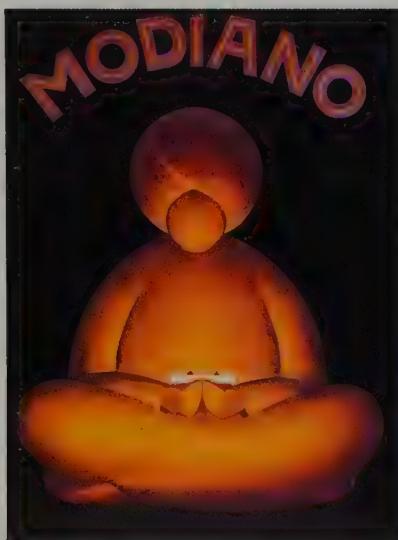
VICTORIA

Hair perms logo, 1938

MARGOT

Cosmetics label, c. 1930

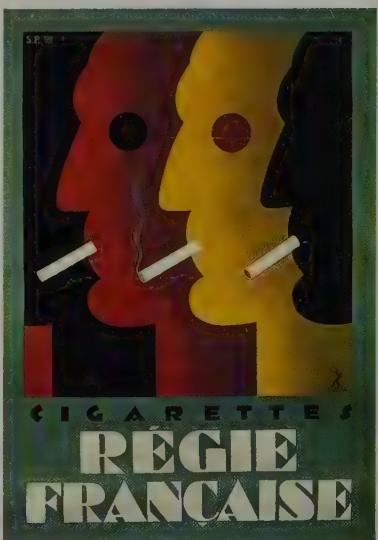




MODIANO
Poster for cigarettes, 1930
Federico Seneca



La sigaretta egiziana fabbricata esclusivamente al Cairo e in vendita presso le principali rivendite di tabacchi e fumatori di lusso



RÉGIE FRANÇAISE
Poster for cigarettes, 1928
Sepo



MATOSSIAN
Advertisement for cigarettes, 1931
Erberto Carboni

ROMA
Advertisement for cigarettes, c. 1931

SIGARETTE

MONOPOLIO
Advertisement, 1930

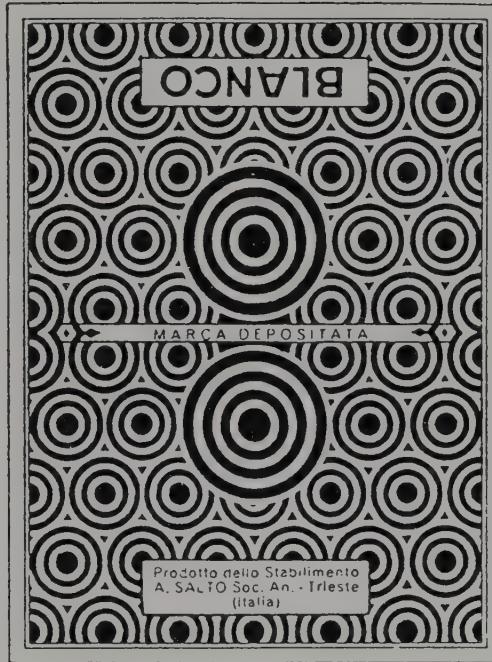




MODIANO
Catalog, 1934



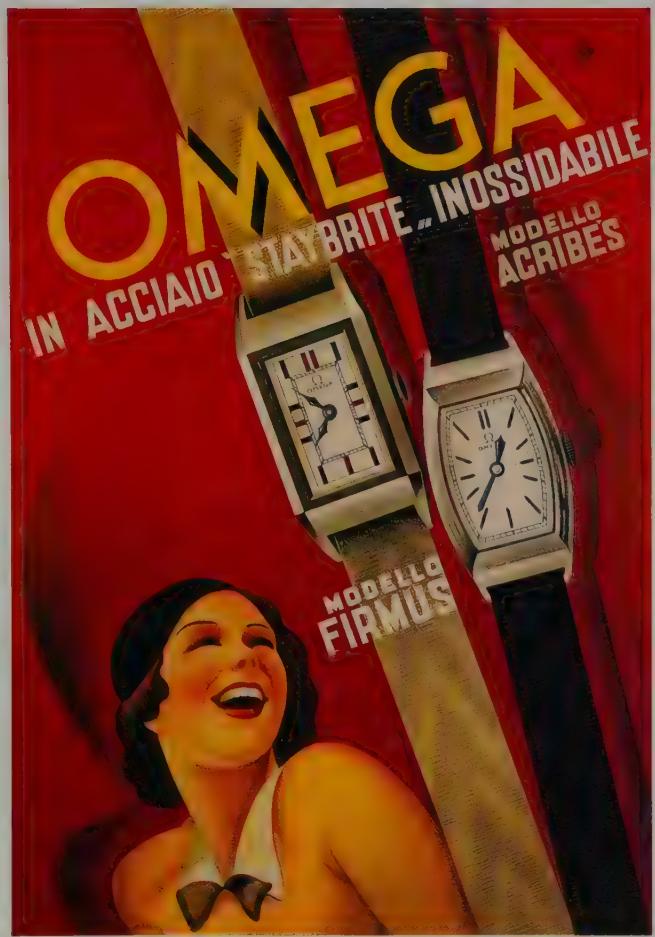
MODIANO
Cigarette package, 1944



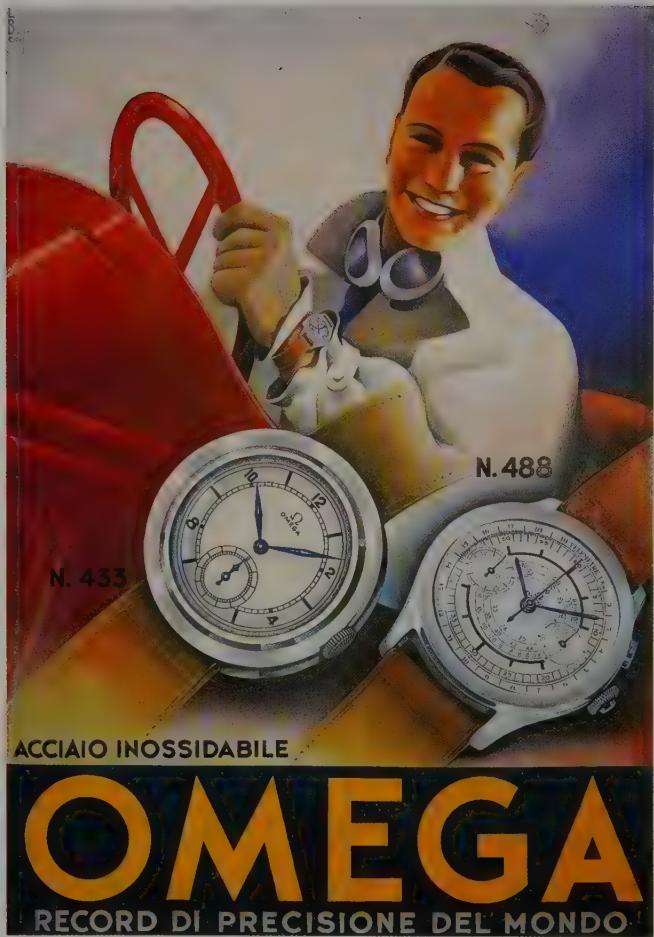
SALTO

Cigarette package, 1938

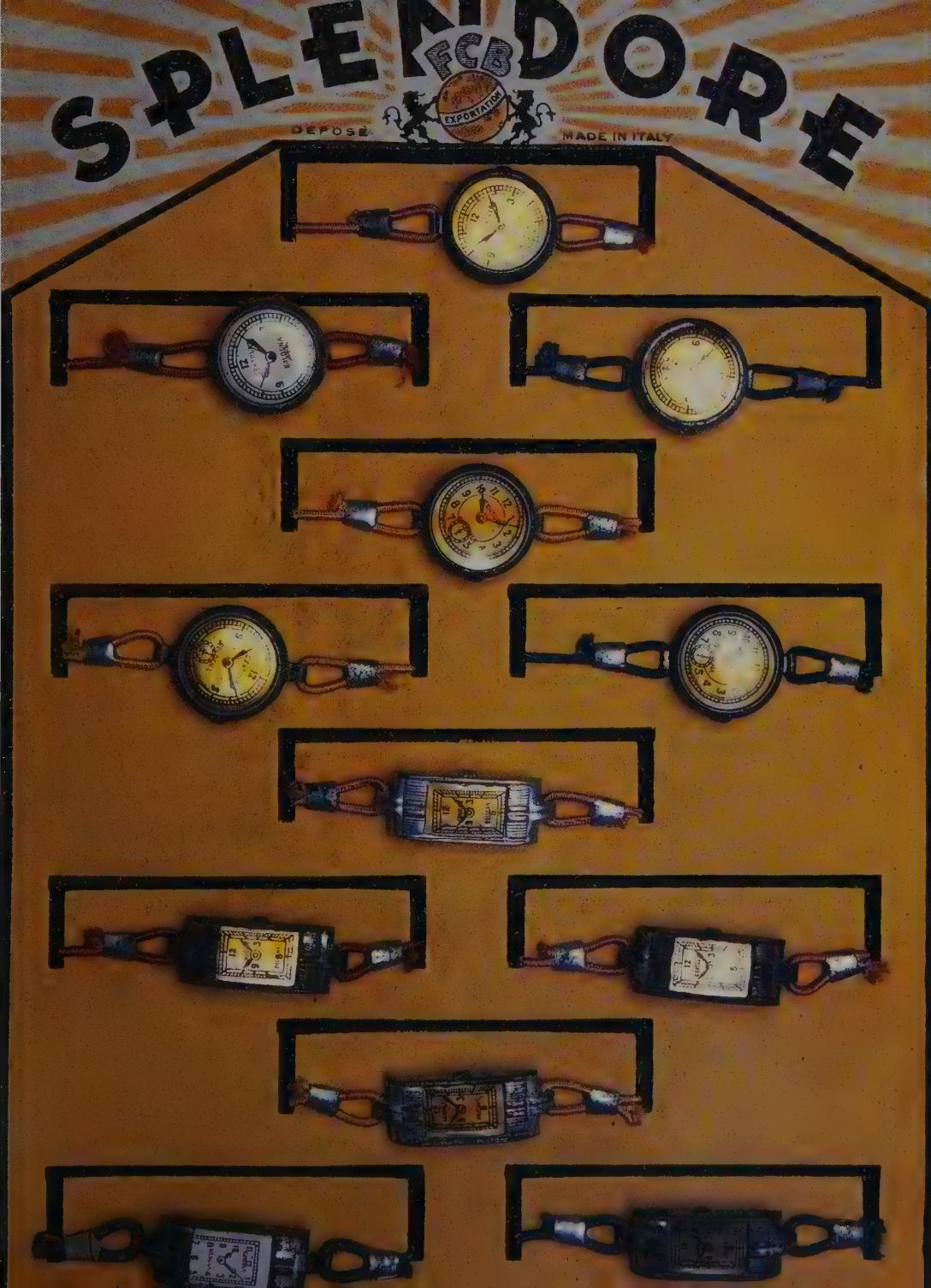




OMEGA
Poster for watches, 1934
Mario Gros



OMEGA
Poster for watches, 1937
Guido Bonacini





PRESBITERO

Penpoint samples, c. 1932

Franco Signorini

QUADRATINO DISEGNATORE

Notebook cover, 1934



10 - Piccolo Costruttore



DORIS

Pencil package, c. 1937

PRESBITERO

Pencil package, 1938

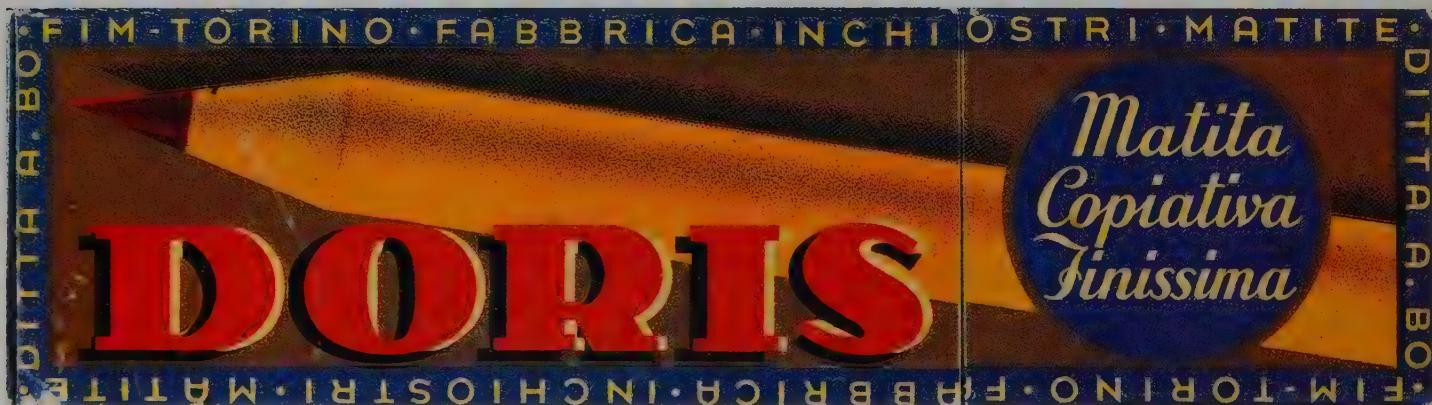
FILA

Pencil label, 1938

FILA

Pencil package, 1935

D. Tofani





At the turn of the century advertising posters were responsible for more than half the sales of Italian goods, especially liquor. Wine has always been one of Italy's flourishing industries — as early as 1900 Chianti was exported to virtually every "non-dry" country in the world — and liquor advertisements were the paradigms of publicity. "This explains the numerous beautiful posters," wrote N.G. Fuime in 1926, "which cover one-third of any Italian wall." No other distiller of spirits understood the value of a consistent graphic identity better than Campari, whose graphic designs were created by some of Italy's leading artists. Most extraordinary are the ads, posters, and publications designed in the thirties by Fortunato Depero, whose humorous, cubistic approach represents the most polished use of the Futurist style. Liquor companies were not alone in exploiting appetizing graphics; packages and promotions for Lazzaroni baked goods, Perugina candy, and Buitoni and Motta foods were created by Italy's most respected designers. In a country where meals are rituals, the graphics of food and drink were a feast for the eye.

BUITONI

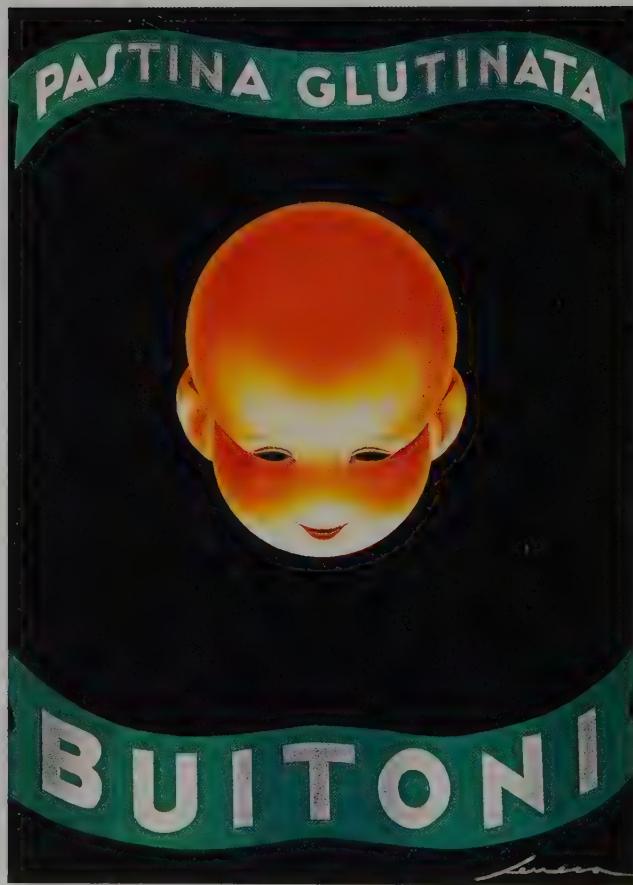
Poster for pastina, 1927

Federico Seneca





BUITONI
Poster for pastina, c. 1932
Federico Seneca



BUITONI
Poster for pastina, c. 1934
Federico Seneca

MARCA
DEPOSITATA



ALA
POLVERE LIEVITA
ALL'OLEOSACCARO DI VANIGLIA

ALA

Baking powder label, 1934

RIVALDO ROSSI
Wheat label, 1944



S.A.P.I.D.I.
MILANO



STELLA D'ITALIA
Cheese label, 1924



MORANDI
Rice label, 1944

ORZO IDROLITICO
Cereal label, 1940



BISCOTTO LUSSO

MILANO



CANARRI
Fruit label, 1938



VIGANO'
Pasta label, 1945



VILCO
Meat label, 1946

IMPERIALE
Biscuit label, 1932



CULTU FERTILIOR
Grain label, 1924



LAZZARONI
Biscuit display, c. 1930



BARATTI & MILANO
Candy label, c. 1938

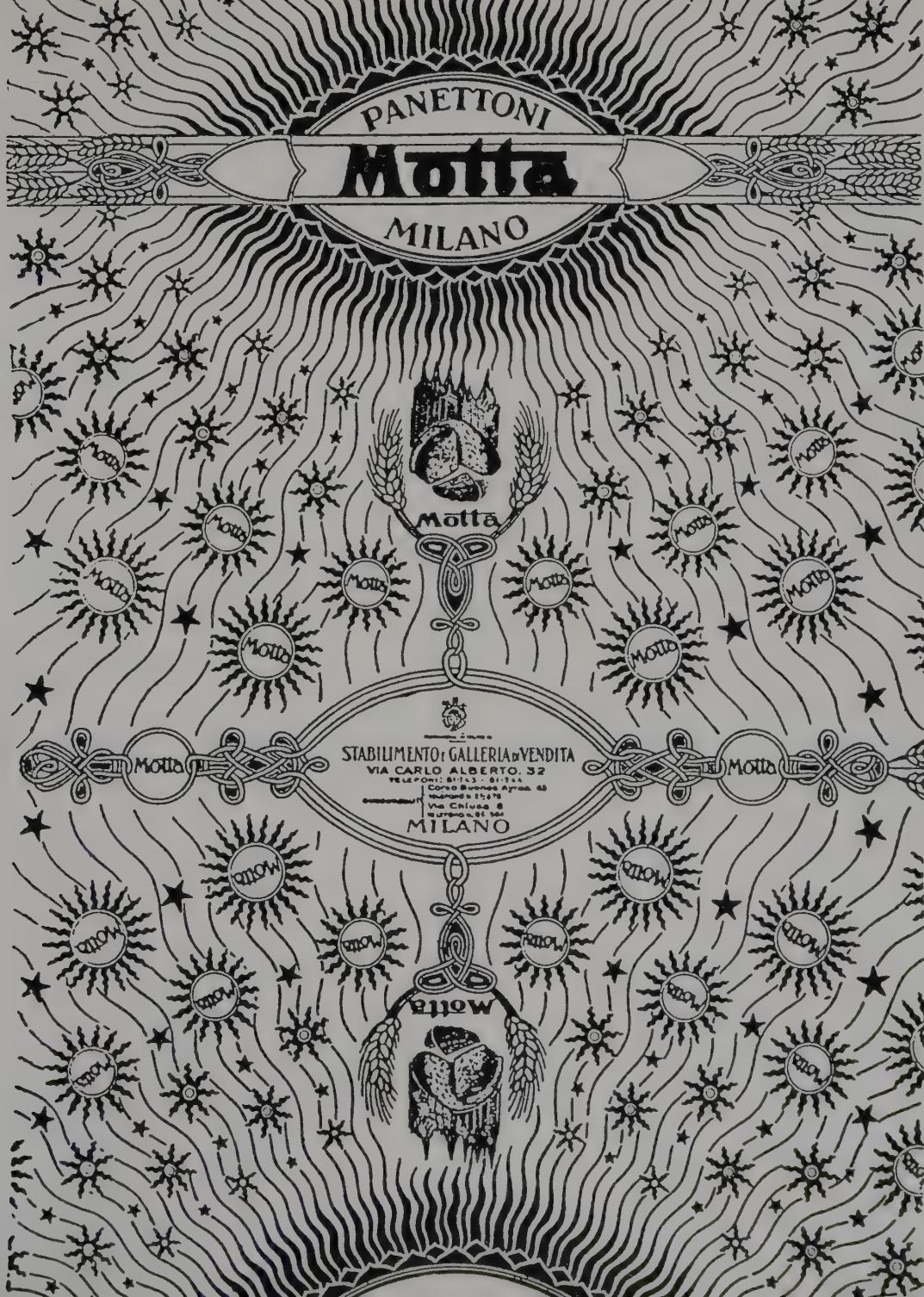


LAZZARONI
Biscuit label, 1924



PANETTONE ALEMAGNA
Cake label, c. 1930

MOTTA
PANETTONI
Package, 1930



(Overleaf)
PASTICCERIA
PAZZAGLIA
PASTICCERIA
C. CAFLISCH
Wrapping papers,
c. 1935

PASTICCERIA PAZZAGLIA

TERNI

PROP. ARTISTICA RISERVATA

5. Centrale dei Banchi di Milano.

**PREMIATA PASTICCERIA SVIZZERA
C. CAFLISCH DI G.B.
PALERMO**

Via Maqueda n.246
Telef. n.14-700

Via Ruggero Settimo, 72
Telef. n. 11-025

Laboratorio: Via Vincenzo Riolo N.5 - Telef. 13-716

GELATI

TEA-ROOM

BAR

FONDANTS

BOMBONS

FORTI

G.B. FRUITA CANDITA

ELVETIA
DOLCE
G.B.

DOLCE SAVOIA
•G.B.

INDIA



DOMENICO BRISTOT
Coffee label, 1934



CACAO DI ATTILIO LATTES
Cacao label, 1934



BOTTEGA DEL CAFFÈ
Coffe label, 1930

CAFFE MOKARABIA
Cup, c. 1938



VAN HOUTEN

CACAO

Poster sketch, 1926

Sepo



APERITIVO ZAFFERANO

Label, c. 1930

Erberto Carboni



ARANCIO
Juice label, 1932



FRANZINI ARANCIATA

Soda label, 1935





GIGLIO

Advertising fan, c. 1935

E. Caroli

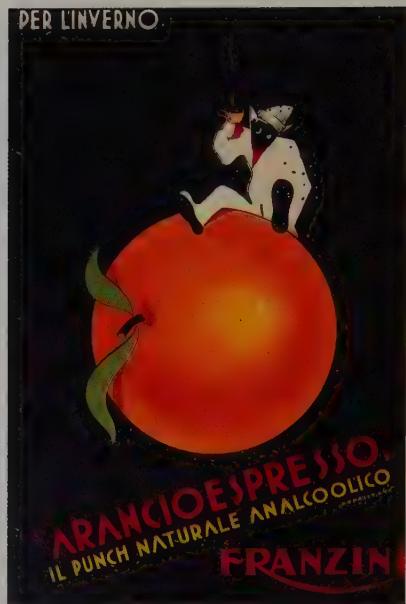
ISOLABELLA

Syrup label, c. 1935



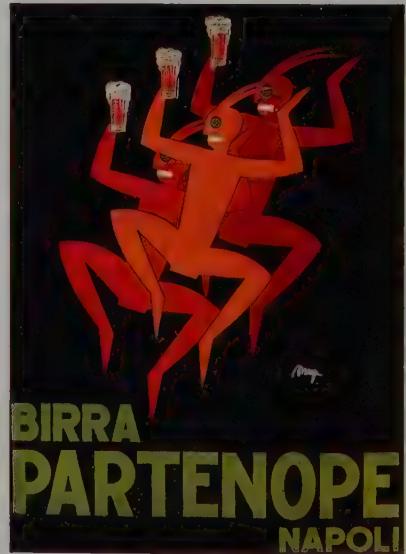


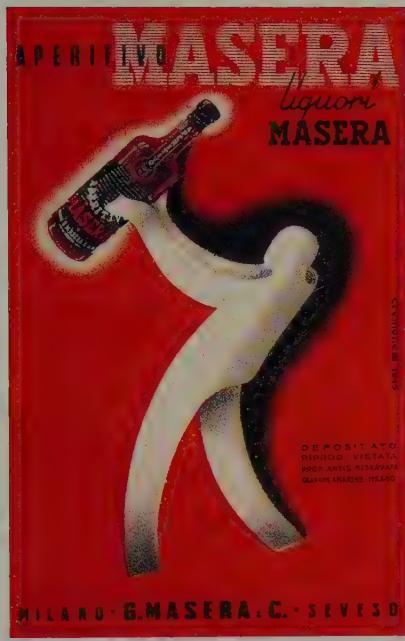
ACQUAVITE
Label, 1936



FRANZINI
Soda label, 1935

PARTENOPE
Poster for beer, 1927
Maga (Magagnoli)





MASERA
Advertisement for liquor, 1932



RAMAZZOTTI
Advertisement for liquor, 1930



MIRAFIORE
Advertisement for wine, 1926
Atla



CAMPARI
Various logos, 1920s-30s
Nicolaj Diugheroff



Bitter Campari
l'aperitivo
Cordial Campari
liquor



CAMPARI
DAVIDE CAMPARI & CO. MILANO
l'aperitivo



CAMPARI SODA
Ceramic ashtray, c. 1930
Nicolaj Diugheroff

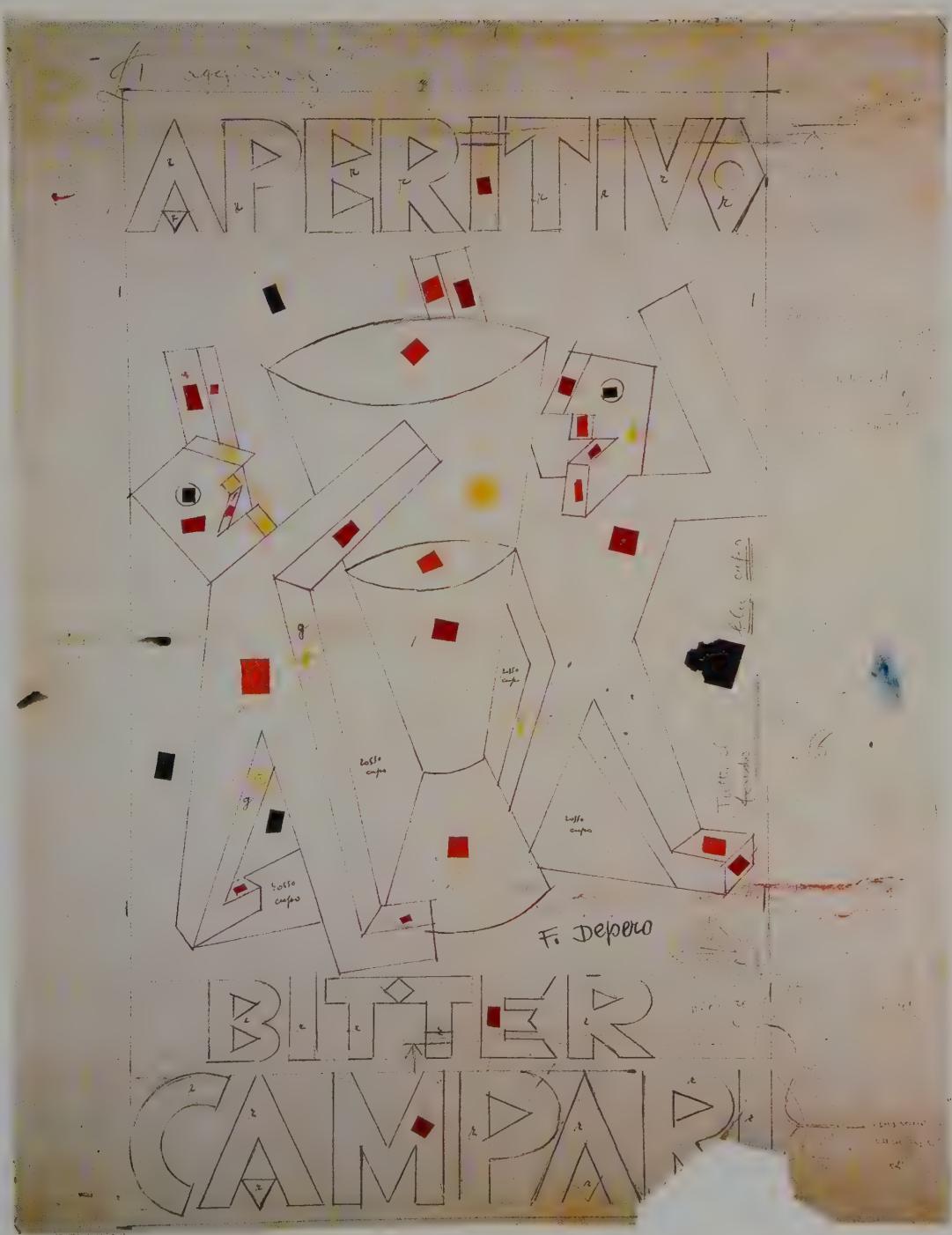


CAMPARI L'APERITIVO
Poster, c. 1931
Marcello Nizzoli

CORDIAL CAMPARI
Poster, c. 1931
Marcello Nizzoli



DAVIDE CAMPARI & CO. MILANO



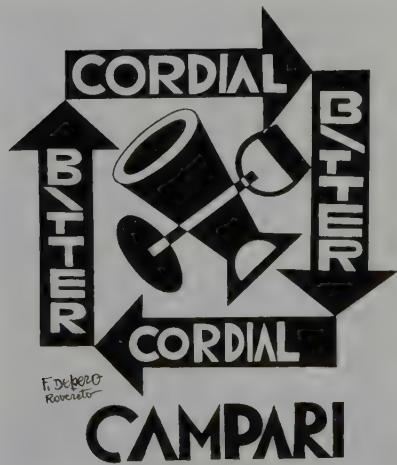
CAMPARI
Concession booth, 1929

APERITIVO BITTER
CAMPARI
Sketch, 1927
Fortunato Depero

CAMPARI BITTER CORDIAL

Advertisement, 1928

Fortunato Depero



CAMPARI L'APERITIVO

Advertisement, c. 1930

Fortunato Depero





CAMPARI L'APERITIVO

Advertisement, c.1930

after Nizzoli



CAMPARI CORDIAL

Poster, c.1930

Nicolaj Diulgheroff



CAMPARI

Delivery truck, c. 1928



PERUGINA

Poster for chocolates, 1928
Federico Seneca



PERUGINA

Poster for chocolates, c. 1929
Federico Seneca



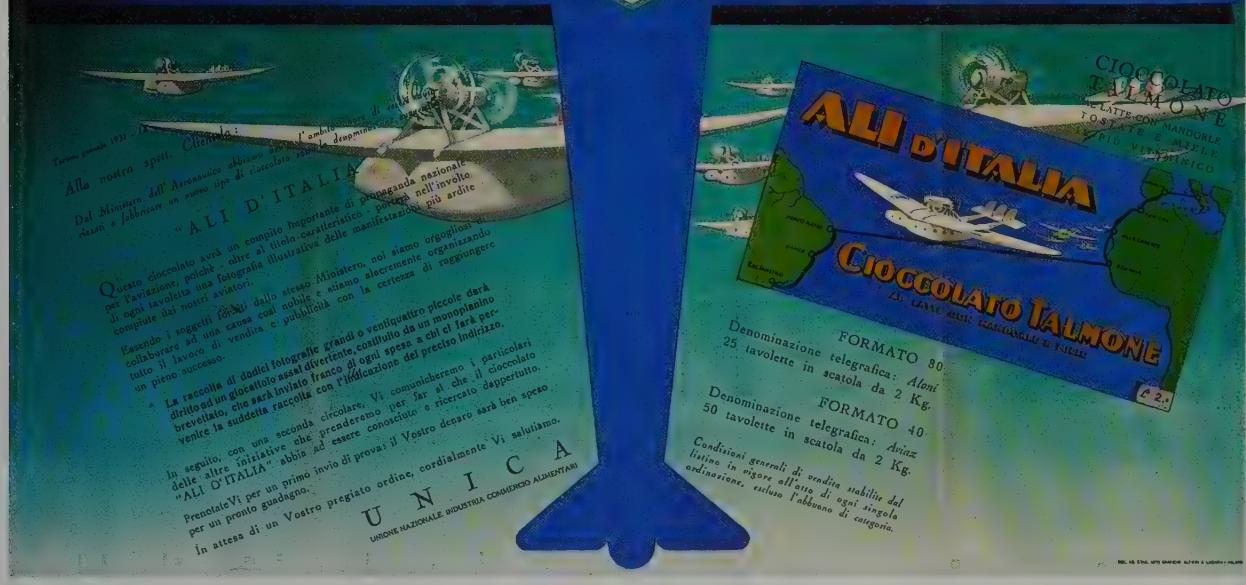
PERUGINA

Poster for chocolates, 1927
Federico Seneca



PERUGINA CHOCOLATES
Label, c. 1928

CIOCCOLATO "ALI D'ITALIA"



ALI D'ITALIA

Advertisements for chocolates, 1931

Mario Gros



Italy is famous for its motor cars. Firms like Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Bugatti, and Fiat made the machines on which automotive legends were built. "The motor car industry, its affinities and accessories, has always been of great interest to Italians," wrote N.G. Fumi in 1926 about the extraordinary number of posters produced at that time. In their reverence for speed the Futurists imbued the automobile with the power of a religious icon, devoting poems, paintings, and graphics to it. After liquor no other advertisements for industry were as ubiquitous, and no other manufacturer was as prolific with its advertising as Fiat. During the twenties Fiat was the largest automotive firm in Europe, and the first to open a special advertising department. Racing added to the allure of the automobile, and posters that idealized this test of man and machine were commonplace. The airplane was also a symbol of futuristic wonder. It is not surprising that Mussolini's own obsession with flying influenced graphics. These depictions were in turn used in ads for the travel and tourist industries, among Italy's most lucrative businesses.

DVLGHEROFF.

ARCO
TORINO

ROSA DI BAGNO
3166

ROSSO LAVINA
3306

GRAN PARADISO
PIANPRATO

L'ORNO
3166

CUNPO BEL
GRAN PARADISO
M. 4061

CAMPIGLIA S.

VALPRATO S.

TRaversella

P. CLARAFONI
3240

ATREZZATA
3600

RONCO C.

DRUSACCO

NOASCA

RIBORDONE

FRASSINETTO

VICO

VISTRORIO

IVREA

PROVVA
3417

CHIVOLET
2861

CERESOLE REALE

LOCANA

PONT

SALE

CASTELLAMONTE

M. LEVANNA
3019

M. BELLARDO
3020

SPARONE

ALMELLA

DEL MONTE

VALPERGA

AGLIE

CANISCHIO

FORNO CAN.

RIVARA

RIVAROLO C.

IL BEL CANVIESE

TORINO

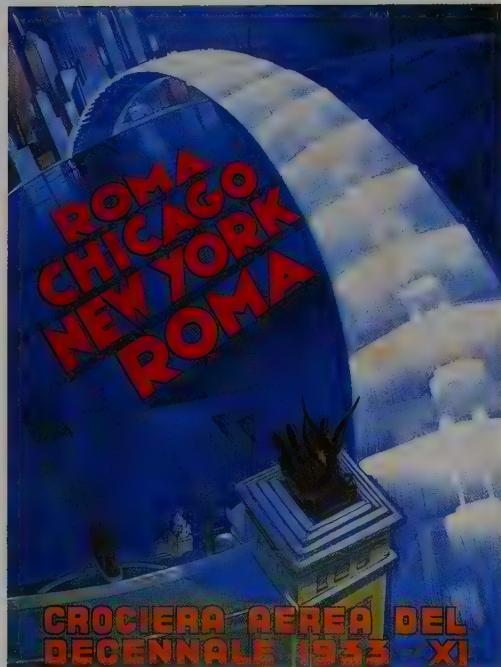
GRAN PARADISO

Travel poster, 1930

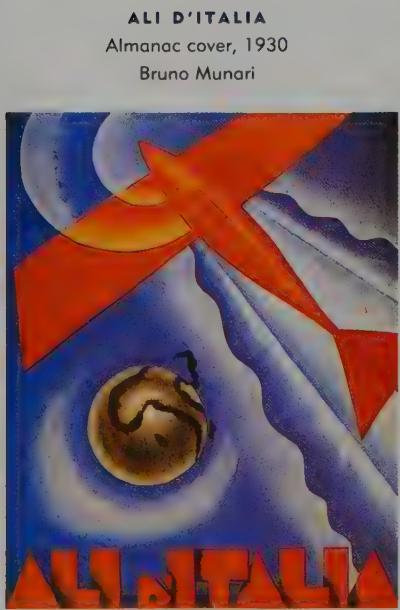
Nicolaj Diugheroff



CROCIERA AEREA
DEL DECENNALE 1933
Poster for exposition, 1933
Luigi Martinati



CROCIERA AEREA
DEL DECENNALE 1933
Poster for exposition, 1933
Luigi Martinati



ALI D'ITALIA
Almanac cover, 1930
Bruno Munari



FIERA
Postcard, c. 1926



GIRO AEREO D'ITALIA

Magazine title panel, 1930

I PERIODICI
DELL'AVIAZIONE ITALIANA

Advertisement, 1935



CROCIERA AEREA DEL DECENNALE

1933

Poster stamp for exposition, 1933

Luigi Martinati



L'ALA ITALIANA

Bookcover, 1939

Yambo



CHAMPION

Poster for sparkplugs, 1928

Lanfranco Felin

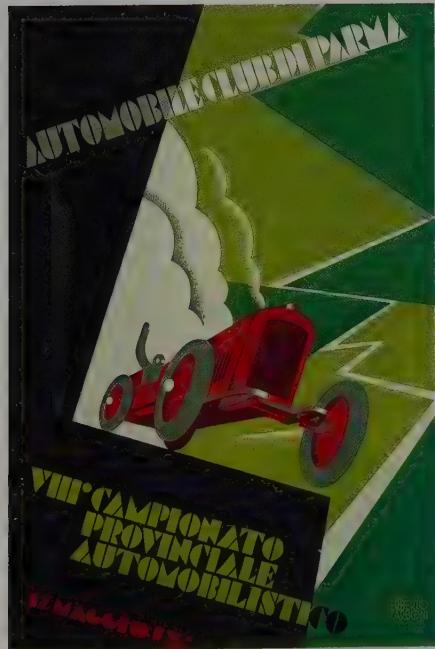
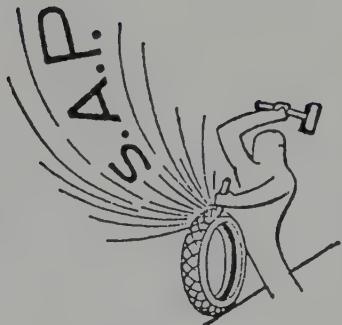




LAMPO
Poster, 1930
Marcello Nizzoli

MAG SPINTER SPARKPLUGS
Poster, 1929
Mario Sironi

SOCIETÀ ANOMINA PNEUMATICI
Logo, 1941



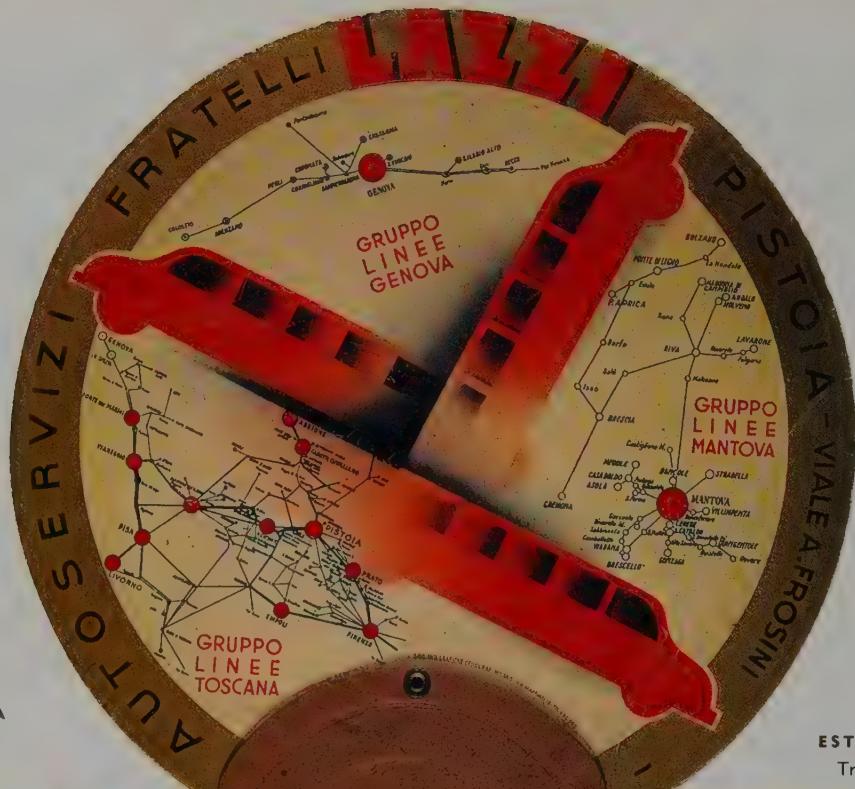
VII CAMPIONATO PROVINCIALE
AUTOMOBILISTICO
Poster, 1930
Erberto Carboni

IV CUNEO COLLE
DELLA MADDALENA
Poster, 1930
Lucio Venna



AUTOSERVIZI LAZZI

Advertising fan, c. 1937



BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Poster for exposition, 1936

Franco Signorini



VENEZIA, GIUGNO-SETTEMBRE 1936 XIV
RIDUZIONI FERROVIARIE

ESTATE LIVORNESSE

Travel poster, 1936



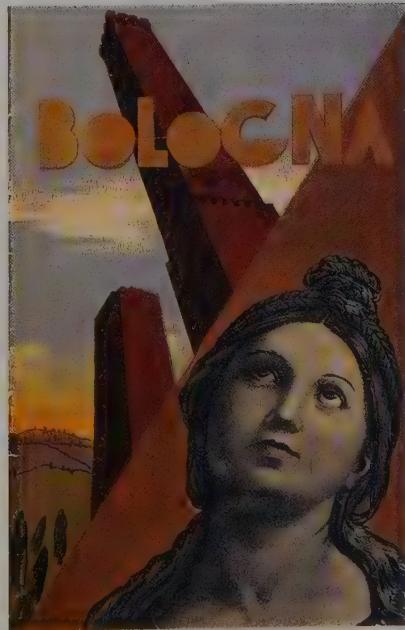
ITALIA

Magazine cover, 1938



BOLOGNA

Travel guide cover, 1932



ITALIA

Magazine cover, 1935



NAPLES

Travel guide cover, 1932



The Futurist rejection of the classical typographic canon disrupted “old snobbish aesthetic ideals.” Their use of many discordant typefaces on the same page, an approach referred to as *Words in Freedom*, ignored entirely any semblance of symmetry. These raucous type designs were akin to comic book lettering, but the origin of the sharp-edged, block sans serif frequently used in Futurist book and magazine design is not clear. The artists who promoted it found hand-drawn letters to be well suited to the improvisational nature of their work — more expressive and freer than conventional types. Yet even when texts were set in preexisting type, the faces were often smashed, distorted, and otherwise deformed to emphasize the transient quality of Futurist poetry. Though typographic standards were routinely challenged, typography in Italy, the birthplace of modern type, was still a serious art. Futurism may have influenced many of the era’s designers, but others, conforming to the spirit of Italianismo, continued to use nineteenth-century scripts and shadowed letters for contemporary logos.



MORA
Perfume label, 1935



RAPIDA
Typewriter logo, 1931



ZACOSA
Electric company logo, 1943

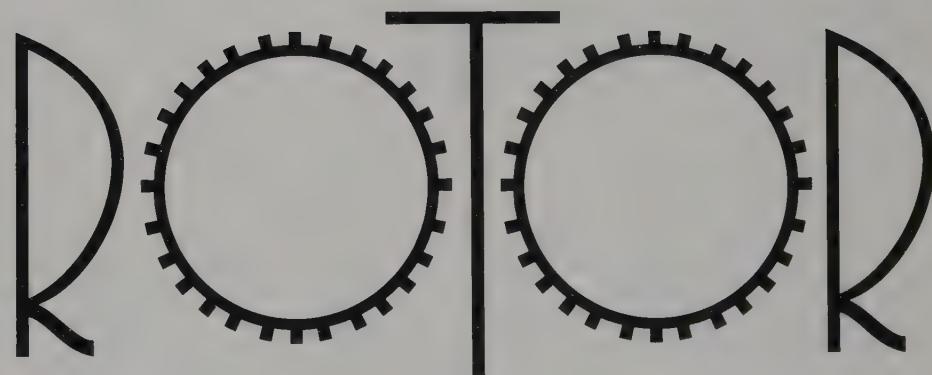


LINCREO
Building materials logo, 1932

ALBA
Soap label, 1944



ROTOR
Motor company logo, 1934



DEKROS
Fabric label, 1935



"*Givi*"

GIVI
Clothes label, 1945

Dulciana
MILANO

LAVOL
Cosmetics label, 1939

aege

DULCIANA
Chocolate label, 1941

AGIR
Manufacturing company logo, 1938

vipla

AEGE
Electronic company logo, 1941

AMBROGIONE
Manufacturing company logo, 1939

VIPLA
Manufacturing company logo, 1940

PRE-FILM
Film company logo, 1941

Savol

Agir

Ombrogione

pre-film 



BOCCANEGRÀ
Olive oil logo, 1922



FLORANOVA
Perfume logo, 1940



BIOFERO
Pharmaceuticals logo, 1923



ROMANINA
Manufacturing company logo, 1944

DIPÌ
Electronics logo, 1945



ABBIAMO PUBBLICATO

Column headline from *Le Grandi Firme*, 1932

ABBIAMO PUBBLICATO
COMMEDIE IN VIVERE
di VOIELLO

VOIELLO
Sign for pasta, c. 1938



VASOLITOL

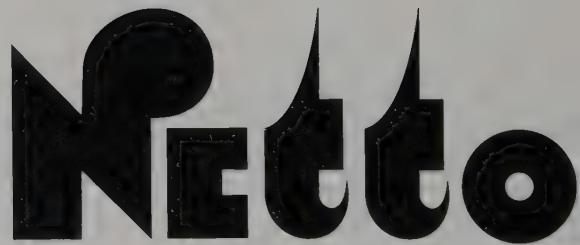
VASOLITOL
Cream logo, 1942



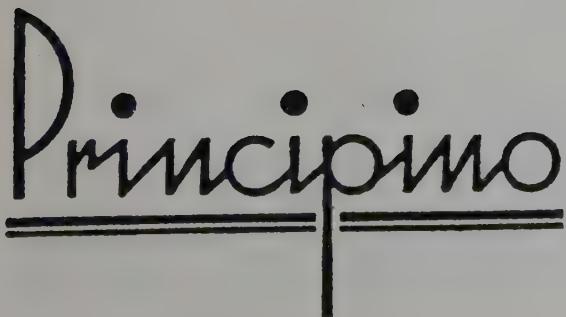
ANSA
Pasta logo, 1941



NETTO
Cleanser logo, 1930



PRINCIPINO
Chocolate logo, 1937



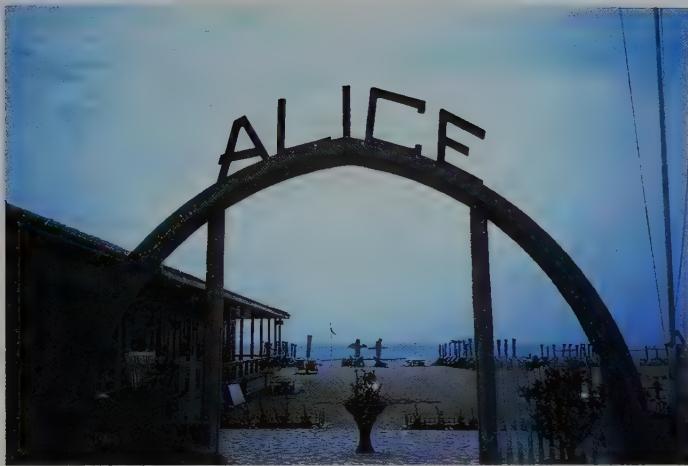
URIT
Shoe label, 1920





VIAREGGIO
Hotel signs, 1930s





AVVISO

DURANTE LE FERMATE
A SARONNO SI HA
IL TEMPO SUFFICIENTE
PER ACQUISTARE, IN
STAZIONE, UNA SCATOLA
DEI FAMOSI AMARETTI
DI SARONNO LAZZARONI

ACQUA
RAPIDA

CARTE
^{DA}
GIUOCO

INSUPERATE E INSUPERABILI

TUTTI I TIPI
REGIONALI
ETIPI ESTERI
COMUNI ED LUSSO

STABILIMENTI
S.D. MODIANO
TRIESTE

TELEGRAMMA

LAMPO

VIA ITALCABLE

MILANO CONFEZIONI

Advertisement, 1935

AVVISO

Advertisement for Lazzaroni biscuits,
c. 1930

ACQUA RAPIDA

Label for shaving lotion, c. 1930

CARTE DA GIUOCO

Advertisement for cigarettes, 1930

LAMPO

Letterhead for telegram, 1929





NIVO
Tape label, c. 1933

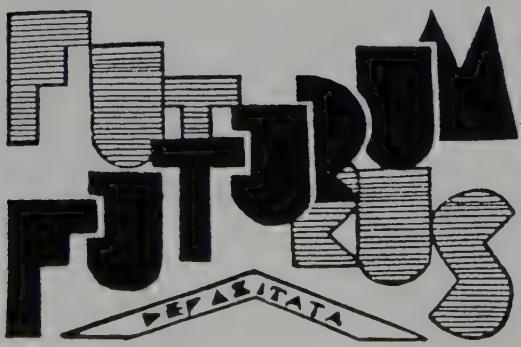
linter

LINTER
Clothes label, 1934

aldj

ALDJ
Perfume package, 1944

eclett



FUTURUM
Machine company logo, 1934



LITTORIA
Film company logo, 1933

AQUILA

AQUILA

Cement company logo, 1940



CO₂

ECLETTICA

Column head for *Gran Bazar*, 1930

Lucio Venna

FEBAR

FEBAR

Fabric label, 1932



INCA

Coffee label, 1930

LOMBARDO

Advertisement for cream, 1934



**COMPLETO
PER GI**

SU ORDINAZIONE

Su Ordinazione

ARRIVI

dalle 13 alle 15

RECLAME

INSEGNE

Signs for shop window display, 1930s



VERO
Electric company logo, 1928

ELETTRICONVETTORE



ARIEL
Electric company logo, 1937



MMM
Fabric logo, 1937

AUTARCASSA

AUTARCASSA

Logo, 1938

Spiga

SPIGA

Fashion label, 1944

CARLI

CARLI

Olive oil label, 1940

g.e.a

GRANDI EMPORI ALIMENTARI

GRANDI EMPORI
ALIMENTARI
Store logo, 1944

MIELUS
Bread label, 1939

Testa Rossa

TESTA ROSSA

Wine label, 1930

Valente

VALENTE
Phonograph company logo, 1939

mIELUS

PANINI AL MIELE

Marchesi
32

AMARETTI DI
SARONNO

Poster for biscuits, 1932
Marchesi



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Steven Heller is a Senior Art Director of *The New York Times* and the author of dozens of books, including *The Art of New York*, *Art Against War*, and the forthcoming *Dutch Moderne: Graphic Design From De Stijl to Deco*. The editor of the American Institute of Graphic Arts' *Journal of Graphic Design*, he writes frequently for *Print*, *Upper and Lower Case*, and *Eye* magazines, and is the recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts design grants.

Louise Fili is principal of Louise Fili Ltd. in New York City, a design firm specializing in book and book jacket, logo, package, and type design in the United States and Italy. Formerly Senior Designer for Herb Lubalin Associates, she was the Art Director for Pantheon Books for eleven years, where she designed and art directed over two thousand book jackets. She was the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts design grant to study the work of W. A. Dwiggins.

Also available from Chronicle Books:

British Trademarks of the 1920s and 1930s

Character Trademarks

Dutch Moderne (1994)

French Trademarks

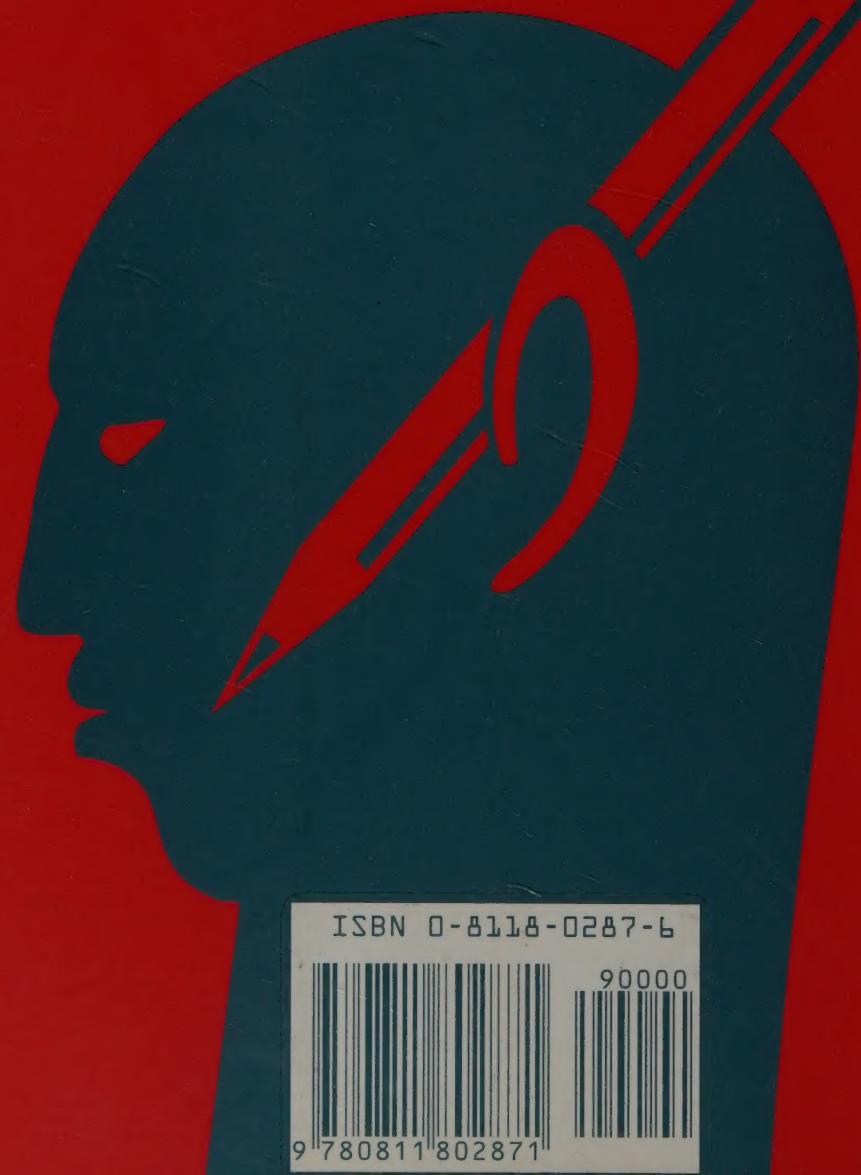
Trademarks of the 20s and 30s

Trademarks of the 40s and 50s

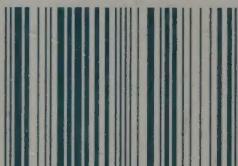
Front cover: Illustration by Alberto Carboni, 1931 for
Matossian Cigarette.

Back cover: Logo for Fila pencils, c. 1934.

FILA.



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